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Old English Customs

THE FAVERSHAM MOOT HORN.

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Old English Customs

Extant at the Present Time

An Account of

Local Observances, Festival Customs, and Ancient Ceremonies yet Surviving in Great Britain

By

P. H. Ditchfield, M.A., F.S.A.

London

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PREFACE

THE object of this work is to describe all the old customs which still linger on in the obscure nooks and corners of our native land, or which have survived the march of progress in our busy city's life. There are many books which treat of ancient customs, and repeat again the stories told by Brand, Hone, and other historians and antiquaries; but, as far as we are aware, there is no book describing the actual folk-customs yet extant, which may be witnessed to-day by the folk-lorist and lover of rural manners. We have endeavoured to supply this want, and to record only those customs which time has spared. Undoubtedly the decay has been rapid. Many customs have vanished, quietly dying out without giving a sign. The present generation has witnessed the extinction of many observances which our fathers practised and revered, and doubtless the

progress of decay will continue. We have entered upon a diminished inheritance. Still it is surprising to find how much has been left; how tenaciously the English race clings to that which habit and usage have established; how ancient customs hold sway in the palace, the parliament, the army, the law courts, amongst educated people as well as unlearned rustics; how they cluster around our social institutions, are enshrined in religious ceremonial, and are preserved by law; how carefully they have been guarded through the many ages of their existence, and how deeply rooted they are in the affections of the English people. It is really remarkable that at the present day, in spite of ages of education and social enlightenment, in spite of centuries of Christian teaching and practice, we have now amongst us many customs which owe their origin to pagan beliefs and the superstitions of our heathen forefathers, and have no other *raison d'être* for their existence than the wild legends of Scandinavian mythology.

I desire to express my thanks to more than

sixty correspondents in different parts of the country for the kind aid they have given me in collecting information for this work. It has often been difficult to determine whether during recent years particular customs have become defunct, and the only method of acquiring trustworthy information has been to communicate with local authorities. I have been fortunate in finding able writers, folk-lorists, and antiquaries in all parts of England, who have kindly written to me concerning the customs in their localities, and furnished me with most valuable information. I gratefully preserve their names:—

Dr. Williamson, Surrey.
Miss Banfield, Cornwall.
Rev. H. Kingsford, Worcester.
V. G. Hewett, Esq., Kent.
S. Andrew, Esq., Lancashire.
Rev. G. B. Brooks, Bucks.
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Rev. A. W. Headlam, Durham.
G. E. Dartnell, Esq., Wilts.
J. W. Bradley, Stafford.
Mrs. Ogle, Cheshire.
Rev. J. B. Robins, Oxford.

I am of course indebted to *Notes and Queries*, which has for so many years devoted much of its space to the preserving of the records of ancient customs. The labours of the Folk-Lore Society are well known, and their publications have been very useful to me in the progress of this work. Finally, I have to express my thanks to Mrs. Gomme, who, in conjunction with her husband, the first President of the Folk-Lore Society, has

done so much for the study of the science of Folk-lore, and who has most kindly assisted me in revising the proof-sheets of this work. For the loan of the illustration of the Faversham Moot Horn I am indebted to the editor and publisher of Mr. Ll. Jewitt's book on Corporation Plate.

P. H. DITCHFIELD.

BARKHAM RECTORY,
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Old English Customs

INTRODUCTION

The decay of old customs—Causes of their decline—Numerous survivals—Not confined to the country—Pagan origin—Importance of their preservation—The calendar.

MANY writers have mourned over the decay of our ancient customs, which the restlessness of modern life has effectually killed. New manners are ever pushing out the old, and the lover of antiquity may perhaps be pardoned if he prefers the more ancient modes. The death of the old social customs, which added such diversity to the lives of our forefathers, has not tended to promote a reign of happiness and contentment in our village communities, but rather to render rustic life one continuous round of labour unrelieved by pleasant pastime.

The causes of the decline and fall of many old customs are not far to seek. Agri-

cultural depression has killed many. The deserted farmsteads no longer echo with the sounds of rural revelry; the cheerful log-fires no longer glow in the farmer's kitchen; the harvest-home song has died away, and "largess" no longer rewards the mummers and morice dancers. When poverty stands at the door, mirth and merriment are afraid to enter. Moreover, the labourer himself has changed; he has lost his simplicity. His lot is far better than it was fifty years ago, and he no longer takes pleasure in the simple joys that delighted his ancestors in days of yore. Railways and cheap excursions have made him despise the old games and pastimes which once pleased his unenlightened soul. The old labourer has died, and his successor is a very "up-to-date" person, who reads the newspapers and has his ideas upon politics and social questions that would have startled his less cultivated sire.

Again, the shriek of the engine has sounded the death-note of many once popular festivals. The railway-trains began to convey large crowds of noisy townsfolk to popular rural gatherings, and converted the simple rustic feasts into pandemoniums of vice and drunken revelry. Hence the authorities were forced to interfere, and to order the discontinuance of the festivals. Such has been the fate of such popular gatherings as the Langwarthby

Rounds, which once delighted the hearts of the Cumberland folk.

In consequence of these causes the decay of many old customs was inevitable. Nevertheless they have not all died yet, and it is indeed surprising how many still linger on in the obscure corners of our native land, where railroads and modern culture have not yet penetrated. We will endeavour to record the customs that still remain, the survivals of old-world rural life. We will visit the quaint and quiet streets of rural towns and villages; hear the rude rhymes of the mummers and "souling" children, and mark their fantastic dress and strange uncouth capers. Handed down from remote antiquity, these verses have been passed on from generation to generation and preserve the record of England's history writ in the memories of her children. Norse legends, that came to our shores with the fierce Vikings, Saxon superstitions, Roman customs, Norman manners, Pagan beliefs, pre-Reformation practices, Tudor triumphs, great events in history, the memory of mighty chiefs and infamous conspirators, are all preserved in our existing customs which time has spared. Popular customs contain the germ of history; and however rude and uncouth they may be, if we look beneath the surface we find curious and interesting stores of antiquarian

lore which well repay the labour of the explorer.

Nor are curious customs confined to the country. The court and the palace, the law courts, the Church, Parliament, military ceremonials, all present interesting features of customs and observances which time has consecrated and not destroyed. We shall notice many strange tenures of property; curious bequests which perpetuate the eccentricity of the benefactors; certain manorial customs which have been termed "jocular;" some municipal customs which certainly have their humorous side; and all the odd and fantastic observances which may be witnessed in the streets of our country towns, as well as in the homes of our villagers.

In Pagan institutions we must ground many old customs and rites, which, travelling to us through an infinite succession of years, have been sadly distorted and disfigured in their progress. Old Paganism died hard, and fought long and stubbornly in its struggle with Christianity. How often do we find the incorporation of some ancient cult and Pagan custom in many observances sanctioned by years of Christian practice? The hot-cross buns on Good Friday, the bonfires on St. John's Eve—relics of old Baal worship—the hanging of mistletoe, the bringing in of the Yule-log, and countless

other customs, many of which still survive, are the results of a compromise. The Christian teachers found the people so wedded to their old rights and usages, that it was vain to hope for the complete abandonment of their long-cherished practices. Hence the old Pagan customs were shorn of their idolatry, and transferred to the Christian festivals. Nor is it uncommon to find survivals of old forms of nature-worship, of various cults of hero or demigod, of propitiatory offerings to the spirits of woods and streams, just as we find the old Norse legends of Loki and Heimdal and Sigyn on the Saxon crosses at Gosforth, blended with the triumphs of Christianity over the prostrate Pagan deities.

Sometimes local customs owe their origin to the popular will in some places, and have become part of the local law. In some cases we find that a particular custom, which seems strange and remarkable, is but a variation of some well-ascertained folk custom which once extended over a wide area. Other popular customs are only observed in one particular place, and owe their origin to some ascertained historical event.[1] They are frequently very extraordinary, and cause us to wonder how the wit of man ever invented such

[1] Presidential address to Folk-Lore Society, by Mr. J. L. Gomme.

strange modes of expressing its ideas and feelings. We wonder, too, how they could have been preserved so long amid the many changes of our social life. We have festival customs, ceremonial customs, and sports and games, to which English folk have ever clung with fond affection. The Church has preserved for us many of our festival customs; ceremonial customs have been guarded by legal enactments, and become connected with all the chief events in human life. Hence we have a mass of customs associated with all our social institutions which will repay our careful examination and close scrutiny.

Existing superstitions, as shown forth by examples of amazing credulity, will find no place in these pages; we must leave to others to record the cases of modern witchcraft, fortune-telling, planet-ruling, and such wonder-working powers, startling to the philosopher of the nineteenth century, who believed that all superstitions had been killed by modern culture and enlightenment. We seek only the ancient customs which survive in town or hamlet, in church or court, where, if our readers will bear us company, we can show to them the strange performance and wild, rude ceremony, and try to discover the origin and meaning of that which we behold. One request I fain would utter: "Villagers and most worthy townsfolk of England, we

know that old customs are dying fast, that old practices are falling into disuse; let them not die, I would beseech you—at least not before these pages are written, lest our good friends whom I shall venture to bring with me to visit you should go away disappointed, and lest hereafter you should mourn the loss of those things which now appear to your enlightened minds of little value or interest."

Most of the local time-honoured customs of Old England are connected with the Church's Calendar. The Church always was the centre of the life of the old village, and the social amusements and holiday observances were associated with the principal feasts and festivals of the Church. Fairs are still held in most places on the festival of the saint to whom the parish church is dedicated. Christmas, Easter, Ascension Day, Whitsuntide, still bring with them their accustomed modes of popular celebration. We propose to follow the course that the Calendar lays down for us, and notice all the remarkable observances which have long ago been incorporated in old English life; and as innocent associations of a simpler, perhaps a happier time, it would be a pity if ever they were allowed altogether to disappear.

CHAPTER I

Christmas customs—Mumming—Folk-drama in Devon, Yorks, &c.—"Vessel boxes"—Carol-singing—Furmety at Christmas—Mistletoe and kissing-bush—Plum-pudding—Christmas-tree—Bell customs at Dewsbury, &c.—Boar's-head at Oxford—Barring out in Cumberland—Mumping and goodening on St. Thomas' Day—Hoodening—"Picrous day"—Burghead custom—St. Stephen's Day and stoning the wren—Yule Doos and local cakes—Boxing Day—Pantomimes—Christmas cards.

ALL the old poets sing in praise of the great festival of the Saviour's birth, which, according to Herrick, "sees December turned to May," and makes "the chilling winter's morn smile like a field beset with corn." Sir Walter Scott bewails the decline of the ancient modes of celebrating the festival, and says—

"England was merry England when
Old Christmas brought his sports again;
A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
A poor man's heart through all the year."

The "Lord of Misrule" has been dead

many years and been decently buried, though when alive he did not always merit that epithet. The Yule-log is no longer drawn in state into the baron's hall, but we have still some fragments of ancient revels preserved in the mummers' curious performance. "Mumming" is supposed to be derived from the Danish word *mumme*, or *momme* in Dutch, and signifies to disguise oneself with a mask. Dr. Johnson defines a mummer as one who performs frolics in a personated dress. Modern mummers usually do not wear masks, but they dress themselves up in a strange garb resembling sheep-skins, except that instead of wool they have coloured paper cut into ribbons. The head-gear is elaborately covered with the same material. The dress of the characters is varied to suit their parts. They have frills over the knees in a fashion somewhat similar to that represented in some pictures of the time of Charles II. Their weapons are wooden swords, but "King George" usually sports an iron one fashioned by the village blacksmith. I have repeatedly witnessed the performance of Berkshire mummers, which is probably the remnant of some ancient "mystery" play, which time and the memories of old Berkshire folk have considerably altered.

There was a celebrated pageant of St.

George which existed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and took a foremost place among the miracle-plays of Old England. "St. George and the Dragon" is a well-known legend, to which the mumming play refers in the words—

"I am St. George, that noble champion bold,
And with my trusty sword I won ten thousand pounds in gold;
'Twas I that fought the fiery dragon, and brought him to the slaughter,
And by those means I won the King of Egypt's daughter."

The scaley appearance of the dresses is supposed to allude to the scales of the dragon, but this interpretation seems fanciful. Then we have a crusading element introduced in the character of "the Turk," and the fierce fight between the Christian knight and "the black Morocco dog." Evidently the Christmas mumming play, and the other forms of folk-drama, the Plough Monday and the Pace egg plays, are adapted from divers sources, and are full of interest.[1]

It is not surprising that the mumming play has many variants; indeed, it varies in different parts of the same county, not only in diction, but also in the *dramatis personæ*.

[1] The subject of the English Folk-Drama has been carefully examined by Mr. T. F. Ordish. Cf. *Folk-Lore Journal*, June 1893.

The words are doggerel rhymes well suited to the idioms and pronunciation of the speakers. The plot in all the plays is somewhat similar. The first person, who acts the part of "the Greek Chorus," is either Beelzebub, otherwise represented as Father Christmas, or "Molly," a man dressed up as an old woman, who introduces the characters. Then enters "King George," a mighty hero, who boasts of his prowess, and challenges all brave warriors to fight. His challenge is accepted by another mighty hero, who is described in some places as the Turkish knight, at others as the Duke of Northumberland or a French officer. In Devonshire "Lord Nelson" also appears. A vigorous fight takes place between the two champions, in which "King George" is usually victorious, and his opponent falls grievously wounded. Sometimes "King George" is defeated, but he fights again and vanquishes his rival. Great consternation ensues, and a doctor is hastily summoned

"To cure this man lies bleeding on the ground."

The "Doctor" comes, and administers a wonderful pill, which revives the prostrate foeman. The jester, "Jack Vinny," who prefers to be called "Mr. John Vinny," extracts a tooth from the wounded man,

and thus cures him. They dance together. "Happy Jack," a very melancholy person in tattered garments, sometimes bearing "his family," a number of little dolls, on his back, enters, and requests some contributions, and with some more rhymes repeated by "Beelzebub" the play ends, and the company sing in turn some modern ditties.

Such is the usual plot of a mumming play, subject to the variations which custom has introduced in different parts of the country.

At Stoke Gabriel, Devon, the characters are St. George, Lord Nelson, a Frenchman, a Turk, a doctor and his wife, Beelzebub, and Father Christmas. Mighty duels with swords take place, and the Turk and Frenchman are defeated. At last Lord Nelson is wounded, and the doctor is summoned by the characters singing—

"Where is a doctor to be found
To cure Lord Nelson's deep and deadly wound."

In vain the doctor's efforts. Lord Nelson dies, and is carried out; but he revives behind the scenes, and returns unofficially to swell the chorus.

Between the duels the champions march up and down and sing. Of St. George and Nelson they say—

"With his pockets lined with red,
And a heart that's ne'er afraid."

But of the Frenchman and the Turk they say—

> "With his pockets lined with blue,
> And a heart that's never true."

The doctor and his wife are comic characters, with masks and absurd dresses; the wife is played by a boy, and causes great amusement by being rather indecorously rolled about on the floor and kicking. Beelzebub is grotesquely dressed, and Father Christmas wears the conventional garb of snowy whiteness. The other characters wear high pasteboard head-dresses decorated with beads and ribbons, and the rest of their attire is hung with ribbons, and made as gorgeous as possible. A fez adorns the head of the valiant Turk.

The actual "Book of Words" of some of these plays may not be without interest, and some examples will be found in the Appendix.

In Yorkshire the mummers come round and perform a very short sword-dance, but their mumming is nothing like the elaborate play which we have noticed elsewhere.

Near Bradford, bands of men dressed as nigger minstrels, in very fantastic costumes, perambulate the streets playing fifes, concertinas, kettledrums, and other instruments, and are known by the plain-spoken York-

shire term, "Bletherhead Bands." Sometimes they enter the houses on New Year's Eve with besoms in order to "sweep out the old year." In Cornwall the mummers rejoice in the no less uncomplimentary term of "Geese-dancers;" and in Staffordshire they are known as the "Guisers." "Billy Beelzebub," the fool of the play performed yearly at Eccleshall, Staffordshire, and Newport, Shropshire, sings a song beginning—

"I am a jovial tinker,
And have been all my life,
So now I think it's time
To seek a fresh young wife.
And it's then with a friend will a merry life spend,
And I never did yet I vow,
With my rink-a-tink-tink, and a sup more drink,
I'll make your old kettles cry sound,
Sound, sound!
I'll make your old kettles cry sound."[1]

The characters in the Guisers' play are: Open-the-door, Sing Ghiles (probably intended for Sir Guy of Warwick), King George, Noble Soldier, Little Doctor, Black Prince of Paradise, Old Beelzebub, and Little Jack Devil-doubt. The first song of the com-

[1] A full account of the Guisers' play, with the words, is given in "Shropshire Folk-Lore," p. 483, and in *Folk-Lore Journal*, 1886.

pany is tuneful and effective, and the words are—

"On a bleak and a cold frosty morning,
When winter inclement they were scorning,
Through the sparkling frost and snow,
And a skating we will go.
Will you follow? will you follow?
To the sound of the merry, merry horn!

See how the skates they are glancing,
From the right to the left they are dancing,
And no danger shall we feel,
With our weapons made of steel.
Will you follow? &c.

See how Victoria reigns o'er us!
She has health, she has wealth, to adore us (!)
In the merry, merry month of May,
All so lively, blithe, and gay.
Will you follow? &c."

The Sussex mummers are called "Tipteerers," and their play, which resembles those printed in the Appendix, has appeared in the *Folk-Lore Journal*.[1]

In Yorkshire, before Christmas, girls, and even women, come round bearing "vessel-boxes," a corruption evidently of "wassail," further changed to "vessel-cups" in the East Riding, and sing the well-known strains of "God rest you, merry gentlemen." At Leeds

[1] Cf. *Folk-Lore Journal*, 1884.

they sing "The five joys of Mary," which begins with the verse—

"The first good joy that Mary had,
It was a joy of one,
To see her own son, Jesus Christ,
To suck at her breast-bone."

The "vessel" is a box containing two dolls, representing the Virgin and Child decorated with ribbons, and having a glass lid. At Aberford it is called a Wesley-box, a further corruption of "wassail," and in no way alluding to the father of a distinguished sect.

Carol-singing is very general in most parts of England, but few old carols are sung. "Good King Wenceslas," and other modern carols or hymns, have supplanted the ancient traditional ones. The singing of carols is a memorial of the hymn sung by the angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem. In some places the children carry round a doll laid in a box, a rude representation of the Holy Child in his manger-bed.

In Worcestershire the carol-singers always end their songs with the following:—

"I wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year,
Pocket full of money, cellar full of beer,
Good fat pig to last you all the year."

In Cambridgeshire (Duxford) the favourite carol is the ancient one—

"God bless you, merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For remember Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas Day."

Cornish folk have always been famous for their carols. Even the knockers and other underground spirits, who are always heard to be working where there is tin, and who are said to be the ghosts of the Jews who crucified Jesus, in olden times held mass and sang carols on Christmas Eve.[1] Some of the tunes of the modern Cornish carol-singers are very old.

Cornish folk, too, are famous for their pies; giblet-pie is the recognised Christmas dainty. Then they have squab-pie, made of mutton and apples, onions and raisins; mackerel-pie, maggety-pie, and so many other pies that it is said, "The devil is afraid to come into Cornwall for fear of being baked in a pie."

In Yorkshire, furmety, or wheat-corn boiled in milk with spices, is eaten on Christmas Eve. The mistletoe is still hung in our houses at Christmas-time, but few connect this instrument of mirth with the wild beliefs of our Norse ancestors. The mistletoe plays

[1] *Folk-Lore Journal*, 1886.

an important part in Scandinavian mythology, and the custom of hanging branches of this plant is common to all Norse nations. The legend is that Baldur was slain by a mistletoe dart at the instigation of Loki; and in reparation for this injury the plant is dedicated to his mother Frigg, so long as it does not touch the earth, which is Loki's kingdom. Hence the mistletoe is hung from ceilings of our houses; and the kiss given under it is a sign that it is no longer an instrument of mischief. In the sixteenth century fêtes were held in France in honour of the mistletoe. Some contend that kissing under the mistletoe is a dead or dying custom; others state that all kissing should be abandoned on the ground that it spreads infection. It is perhaps difficult to arrive at any safe conclusion with regard to the prevalence of this particular custom, as those who practise it are not always the most forward in proclaiming their adherence to primitive usages.

The old "kissing bunch" is still hung in some of the most old-fashioned cottage houses of Derbyshire and Cornwall—two wooden hoops, one passing through the other, decked with evergreens, in the centre of which is hung "a crown" of rosy apples and a sprig of mistletoe. This is hung from the central beam of the living-room, and beneath it there is much kissing and romping. Later on, the

carol-singers stand beneath it and sing the familiar strains of "God rest ye, merry gentlemen," and "While shepherds watched."

Among the foods peculiar to special seasons, none is so common as the plum-pudding at Christmas. "Time immemorial" is the usual period assigned for the introduction of practices about which knowledge is limited, and the date of the invention of Christmas plum-puddings has been relegated to that somewhat vague and indefinite period. But the plum-pudding is not older than the early years of the eighteenth century, and appears to be a "House of Hanover" or "Act of Settlement" dish. The pre-Revolution or Stuart preparation of plums and other ingredients was a porridge or pottage, and not a pudding, and was made with very strong broth of shin of beef.

The searchers of the symbolical interpretations contend that on account of the richness of its ingredients the plum-pudding is emblematical of the offerings of the Wise Men. The same authorities assert that mince-pies, on account of their shape, are symbolical of the manger-bed of the Infant Saviour. I venture to think that such interpretations should be received with some hesitation.

The children still delight in their Christmas-tree, which also belongs to no "immemorial time," the first Christmas tree being introduced

to this country by some German merchants who lived at Manchester. The Queen and Prince Albert also celebrated Christmas with its beautiful old German custom; and the Court having set the fashion, Christmas-trees became general, and have brought endless delights to each succeeding generation of children.

In a few remote districts in Cornwall on Christmas Eve children may occasionally be found dancing around painted lighted candles placed in a box of sand.[1] Church towers, too, are sometimes illuminated. Tennor Church tower was made brilliant by a beacon-light a few years ago, and we hope that the custom has been continued.

A very interesting custom prevails near Dewsbury. On Christmas Eve, as soon as the last stroke of twelve o'clock has sounded, the age of the year—*e.g.* 1895—is tolled as on the death of any person. It is called the Old Lad's, or the Devil's, Passing Bell. A carol has been written on this subject:—

"Toll! toll! because thus ends the night,
And empire old and vast,
An empire of unquestioned right,
O'er present and o'er past.
Toll!

[1] Miss Courtney, "Cornish Customs," *Folk-Lore Journal*, 1886.

Stretching far from east to west,
Ruling over every breast,
  Each nation, tongue, and caste.

Toll! toll! because a monarch dies,
  Whose tyrant statutes ran
From Polar snows to Tropic skies,
  From Gravesend to Japan.
    Toll!
Crowded cities, lonely glens,
Oceans, mountains, shores, and fens,
  All owned him lord of man.

Toll! toll! because the monarch fought
  Right fiercely for his own,
And utmost craft and valour brought
  Before he was o'erthrown.
    Toll!
He the lord and man the slave;
His the kingdom and the grave,
  And all its dim unknown.

Joy! joy! because a babe is born,
  Who, after many a toil,
The scorner's pride shall laugh to scorn
  And work the foiler's foil.
    Joy!
God as Man the earth has trod,
Therefore man shall be as God,
  And reap the spoiler's spoil."

In many parishes the bells are tolled before midnight on the 31st of December, and a

joyous peal heralds the advent of the New Year. At Kirton-in-Lindsay this custom is as old as 1632, the following entry appearing in the Churchwardens' account-books: "Item, to the ringer of new yeare day morninge xiid."

In several places, notably at Woodchester, Gloucestershire; Norton, near Evesham; Wells and Leigh, Somerset, a muffled peal is rung on Holy Innocents' Day in commemoration of the martyrdom of the Babes of Bethlehem. At Norton, after the muffled peal has ceased, the bells are unmuffled, and a joyous peal is rung for the deliverance of the Infant Jesus.

At Queen's College, Oxford, the Boar's-head feast is still celebrated with accustomed ceremonial. The mythical origin of the custom is the story of a student of the College who was attacked by a wild boar while he was diligently studying Aristotle during a walk near Shotover Hill, some five hundred years ago. His book was his only means of defence; so he thrust the volume down the animal's throat, exclaiming, "Græcum est!" The boar found Greek very difficult to digest, and died on the spot; and the head was brought home in triumph by the student. Ever since that date, for five hundred years, a boar's-head has graced the College table at Christmas. The custom is really as old as

heathendom, and the entry of the boar's-head, decked with laurel and rosemary, recalls the sacrifice of the boar to Frigg at the midwinter feast of old Paganism.

Every Christmas Day this "right merrie jouste of y^e^ olden tyme" is enacted at Queen's College. A large boar's-head, weighing between sixty and seventy pounds, surmounted by a crown, wreathed with gilded sprays of laurel and bay, mistletoe and rosemary, with small banners surrounding, is brought into the hall by three bearers, whose entry is announced by trumpet. A procession of the Provost and Fellows precedes the entry of the boar's-head. The bearers are accompanied by the precentor, who chants an old English carol, the Latin refrain being joined in by the company. The following are the words of this ancient ditty:—

"Caput apri defero,
Reddens laudes Domino.
The boar's-head in hand bring I,
Bedecked with bays and rosemary;
And I pray you, masters, be merry,
Qui estis in convivio.

The boar's-head, I understand,
Is the bravest dish in all the land,
When thus bedecked with gay garland:
Let us servire cantico.

Our steward hath provided this,
In honour of the King of Bliss,
Which on this day to be served is
In Reginensi Atrio.

Chorus—Caput apri defero,
Reddens laudes Domino."

There are four versions of this ancient carol. The earliest is called "The Original Carole," taken from "Christmess Carolles, newly emprynted at London in ye flete strete, at ye sygne of ye sonne, by Wynkyn de Worde. The yere of our Lorde m.d. xxi." The second is the one already quoted. The third is very rare, and is taken from the Balliol MSS., No. 354; and the fourth is from the Porkington MSS., a fifteenth-century collection. The origin of this strange custom certainly can be traced to the old Scandinavian Yule festival, when an offering of a boar's-head was always made. However, in support of the mythical story of the student and the boar, there is preserved in the College a picture of a saint having a boar's-head transfixed on a spear, with a mystic inscription, "Cop cot;" and in Horspeth Church, near which the contest is supposed to have taken place, there is a window containing a representation of the incident.

In spite of the schoolmaster and the School Board, the old custom of barring out during

the Christmas holidays still prevails in Cumberland. A few years ago the Dalston School Board received a letter from the master, requesting that the school might close on the Thursday before Christmas instead of the Friday, on the ground that "the old barbarous custom of barring out" the schoolmaster might no longer be resorted to. If the school were opened on the Friday, the master was of opinion that the children might possibly be persuaded by outsiders to make an attempt to bar him out, and would then have to suffer a large amount of severe castigation. The school was accordingly closed on the Thursday, much to the regret of the chairman and others, who would like to have witnessed the repetition of so ancient a custom. (*Notes and Queries.*)

The festivals associated with Christmas have some old customs. On St. Thomas' Day (December 21), the custom of mumping is still practised in many places, notably at Hornsea, East Yorks, where the old women perambulate the town and are accustomed to receive small gratuities. The word *mumping* comes to us from the Dutch, and signifies to *mumble* or *mutter*. The beggars on this occasion are usually old people, and toothless age mumbles both food and words; hence the beggars are called *mumpers*, and they are said "to go a mumping." In many parts of

the country it is called "going a-gooding;" in Cheshire, "going a-Thomasing;" and in some places in Staffordshire the money collected is given to the vicar and churchwardens, who distribute it to the poor aged folk on the Sunday after St. Thomas' Day. The following rhyme for this day is taken from the *Bilston Mercury*, Staffordshire:—

"Well a day, well a day,
St. Thomas goes too soon away;
Then your gooding we do pray,
For the good time will not stay.
St. Thomas Grey, St. Thomas Grey,
The longest night and the shortest day,
Please to remember St. Thomas Day."

At Stoulton, Worcester, and at Polebrooke, Oundle, the custom of going "gooding" or "Tommying" is kept up, and also at Newington-by-Sittingbourne, Kent, a beautiful village, where, amid a setting of orchard and hop-land, old-world manners may well be pleased to dwell. It is there known as goodenin'. The old widows assemble on St. Thomas' Day and proceed to the houses of the gentlemen and farmers, who are requested to "please remember the goodenin'." Gifts of money are bestowed upon the goodeners, who repair to the White Hart Inn and divide the spoil. The derivation of the word is a subject for conjecture. A correspondent

suggests that it is derived from "goody," the name given to old widows; while another writer connects goodening or hoodening with Woden or Odin, the presiding deity of the ancient Yuletide rites.[1] The custom also prevails in Hampshire,[2] and until recently at Great Gransden, Huntingdon, where the vicar now receives the alms and gives the old women a tea.

Hoodening is a kind of old horse-head mumming once prevalent in Kent, and still exists in some places. Hoodening is observed still at Walmer; the young men perambulate the village, bearing a Hoodening Horse, a rudely cut wooden figure of a horse's-head with movable mouth, having rows of hob-nails for teeth, which opens and shuts by means of a string and closes with a loud sharp snap. It is furnished with a flowing mane, and is worn on the head of a ploughman, who is called the Hoodener. It is suggested that the wooden (pronounced 'ooden or hooden) horse's-head gave the name to hoodening or goodening. We must leave the solution of this difficult derivation to the discretion and judgment of our learned readers.[3] It is evidently con-

[1] "Kentish Odds and Ends," in *Kentish Express*, by A. Moore.

[2] "Old Woman's Outlook," Miss Young, p. 280.

[3] Hone suggests that it is an ancient relic of a festival ordained to commemorate our Saxon ancestors' landing in the Isle of Thanet.

nected with the old Pagan feast held on the Kalends of January in the seventh century, when men used to clothe themselves with the skins of cattle and carry heads of animals. A similar custom prevails at Northwich, Cheshire, on All Souls' Day, when a gang of boys and girls come round at night, reciting verses and singing snatches of songs, accompanied by a man dressed as a horse. The monster prances and clatters with its hoof when a modest coin is presented to it. Possibly hoodening is a relic of the old hobby-horse dance which once formed one of the leading festivities in the Squire's-hall at Christmas. At any rate, hoodening is a very ancient custom, which still lingers amongst us, and attracts the attention of the curious in Old English manners.

At Kingscote, Gloucestershire, they have a peculiar kind of Bull Hoodening. Every Christmas, five or six villagers go from house to house with a wassail-bowl, and one personates a bull by crouching on the ground, his body hid by sacking, and his head by a real bull's face, hair, and horns complete. He is commonly called "the Broad," and each verse of the Wassailing-Bowl song is sung, beginning :—

"Here's a health to Old Broad and to his right eye."

The present Rector of Kingscote has

known the custom for sixty years, but has never heard of its existence in any other place, and no hint of its origin has been obtained. It is probably a survival of the old Pagan feast mentioned above.

The following rhyme is uttered at Harvington, Worcestershire :—

> "Wissal, wassail, through the town,
> If you've got any apples throw them down ;
> Up with the stocking and down with the shoe,
> If you've got no apples, money will do ;
> The jug is white, and the ale is brown,
> This is the best house in the town."

In some counties corn used for furmety is given away, and this is called in Lincolnshire "mumping wheat." At Saxton, near Tadcaster, Aberford, Sherburn, and other small towns in Yorkshire, the children go round to the farmhouses begging for furmety, singing the old doggrel verses.

The second Thursday before Christmas in East Cornwall is observed by the miners as a holiday in honour of one of the reputed discoverers of tin. It is known as Picrous Day, but who this saint or early metal-worker was, history relateth not. There is also a White Thursday in Cornwall, in no way related to the *Dominica in albis*. It occurs on the last Thursday before Christmas, and tradition records that on this day white

tin (*i.e.*, smelted tin) was first made in Cornwall; hence its name, Chewidder or White Thursday. (*Notes and Queries.*)

Fishermen are somewhat superstitious folk, and love to preserve their ancient customs. The seamen of Burghead, Elgin, on Yule night meet at the west end of the town, carrying an old barrel, which they proceed to saw in two. The lower half is then nailed to a long spoke of firewood, which serves as a handle. The half barrel is then filled with dry wood saturated with tar, and built up like a pyramid, leaving a hollow to receive a burning peat. Should the bearer stumble or fall, the consequences would be unlucky to the town and to himself. The Claire is thrown down the western side of the hill, and a scramble ensues for the burning brands, which bring good luck, and are carried home and carefully preserved till the following year as a safeguard against all manner of ills. The Claire used to be carried round all the ships in the harbour, but this part of the custom has now been discontinued. (*Folk-Lore.*)

Before the days of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, boys were accustomed in many places, notably Essex, Ireland, and the Isle of Man, to kill wrens, and carry them about on furze bushes from house to house, repeating the words—

"The wren, the wren, the king of the birds,
St. Stephen's Day was killed in the furze;
Although he be little his family's great,
And so, good people, give us a treat."

The origin of the cruel custom is curious. There is a Norse legend of a beautiful siren who bewitched men and lured them into the sea, after the fashion of the Lurlie of Rhineland fame. A charm was obtained to counteract her evil influence and capture the siren, who contrived to escape by assuming the form of a wren. Once every year, presumably on St. Stephen's Day, she was compelled by a powerful spell to appear in the guise of the bird, and ultimately to be slaughtered by mortal hand. Hence poor wrens are killed in the hope of effecting the destruction of the beautiful siren. The feathers of the birds are plucked and preserved as a prevention from death by shipwreck, and formerly its body was placed in a bier, and buried with much solemnity in a grave in the churchyard, while dirges were sung over its last resting-place. Few wrens are stoned now, and I imagined that the custom had happily died out. However, in the Isle of Man I find that it still lingers, and the "hunting of the wren" is solemnised to a large extent. Numerous "bushes" are borne about by groups of lads chanting a monotonous ditty. They adorn the "bushes" with much taste,

but a large number are usually minus the wren itself. The bush consists of two hoops crossed, with a wren suspended by the legs in the centre. The usual rhyme is—

"We hunted the wren for Robin the Bobbin;
We hunted the wren for Jack of the Can;
We hunted the wren for Robin the Bobbin;
We hunted the wren for every one."

The boys collect money, and present a feather of the bird to each donor, which is supposed to avert the danger of shipwreck. Afterwards the bird is buried on the seashore (formerly in the churchyard) with much solemnity, and dirges in Manx language are sung over it. (*Folk-Lore* and *Notes and Queries.*)

A wren-box was sold at Christie's a few years ago, which used to be carried in procession in some parts of Wales on St. Stephen's Day. It is about seven inches square, and has a glass window at one end. Into this box a wren was placed, and it was hoisted on two long poles, and carried round the town by four strong men, who affected to find the burden heavy. Stopping at intervals, they sang—

"'O where are you going?' says milder to melder;
'O where are you going?' says the younger to the elder.
'O I cannot tell,' says Festel to Fose;
'We're going to the woods,' said John the Red Nose.
We're going, &c.

'O what will you do there?' says milder to melder;
'O what will you do there?' says the younger to the elder.
'O I do not know,' says Festel to Fose;
'To shoot the cutty wren,' says John the Red Nose.
To shoot, &c."

And so on for eight more verses, taking the form of question and answer, as in the ballad of "Cock Robin," and describing the method of shooting the wren, cutting it up, and finally boiling it.

Fanciful interpreters have seen in the stoning of the wren a connection with the stoning of St. Stephen, whose martyrdom occurred on the day of the observance of this barbarous custom. Another legend is that one of St. Stephen's guards was awakened by a bird just as his prisoner was about to escape. In Worcestershire St. Stephen's Day is a great occasion for pigeon-shooting. Possibly this may have arisen from the old-world custom of hunting the wren.

In the North of England children are still regaled with Yule "doos," which are flat cakes, from six to twelve inches long, roughly cut into the shape of a human figure, raisins being inserted for the eyes and nose. The name is probably derived from *dough*, and the shape was doubtless originally intended to represent the Infant Saviour with the Virgin Mary. In Cornwall, too, they have

a peculiar cake, a small portion of the dough in the centre of each top being pulled up; and this small headpiece to the cake is called "The Christmas." The cakes are given away to poor people, and each member of the family has his own special cake. The whole subject of local cakes, feasten and customary, is full of interest; and at a recent Folk-lore Congress, Mrs. Gomme exhibited a large collection gathered from different parts of Great Britain. There are cakes peculiar to certain towns and villages; cakes commemorative of special events; cakes connected with harvest, sowing, births, marriages, funerals, and the great Church festivals, and others. It is surprising to learn the amazing number of peculiar forms which local custom has sanctioned and ordained, and the old Yule "doos" were not the least interesting of this remarkable collection.

Children of both "larger and smaller growth" still look forward to the Christmas Pantomime, which, in spite of modern developments, maintains its popularity, especially in the provinces. Pantomimes have entirely changed their character since they were first introduced into this country by a dancing-master of Shrewsbury, named Weaver, in 1702. The humours of Grimaldi and his successors, the merry tricks of the

clown and the diversions of the harlequinade, have given place to grand spectacular displays and scenic effects which would certainly have astonished our forefathers. However, the Pantomime will probably long continue to hold its place on the list of existing customs of the English people.

The day after Christmas is still known as "Boxing Day," and is so called from the "Christmas Boxes" which used to be in circulation at that time. In the British Museum are specimens of "thrift-boxes" — small and wide bottles with imitation stoppers, from three to four inches in height, of thin clay, the upper part covered with a green glaze. On one side is a slit for the introduction of money, and as the small presents were collected at Christmas in these money-pots, they were called Christmas boxes. Thus these boxes gave the name to the present itself and to the day when these gifts were commonly made. Christmas gift-books are extensively published now. The first announcement of such a book appeared in the *General Advertiser* of January 9, 1750, and was published by Mr. J. Newberry at the "Bible and Sun" in St. Paul's Churchyard. It was called "Nurse Truelove's Christmas Box; or, The Golden Plaything for Little Children, by which they may learn the letters as soon as they can

speak, and know how to behave so as to make everybody love them."

The sending of Christmas-cards is a very popular custom, which shows no signs of decay. The custom is of very recent growth, the first English Christmas-card being issued from Summerly's *Home Treasury* Office, 12 Old Bond Street, in 1846. The design was drawn by J. C. Horsley, R.A., at the suggestion of Sir Henry Cole, K.C.B., representing a merry family party gathered round a table quaffing generous draughts of wine. The sale of a thousand copies of this card was then considered a large circulation. Since those days the custom has become universal. If good wishes could bring us happiness, our cups of joy would indeed be full, and a "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" would fall to the lot of all, except to the postmen.

CHAPTER II

New Year's Day and first-footing—Banffshire custom—Wassail bowls—New Year's gifts and good wishes—Midnight services—Queen's College, Oxford—Yorks custom—Local rhymes and wassailers—Quaaltagh in Isle of Man—Twelfth Night or Epiphany—Plough Monday—Wassailing orchards—Court custom—Haxey Hood—Watching animals—St. Paul's Day—Valentine's Day—Islip valentine—Customs in Berks and Essex—Hurling at St. Ives.

ONE of the earliest customs that I can recollect is that of first-footing on New Year's Eve, which is commonly practised in the North of England and in Scotland. The first person who enters the house after midnight is called the first-foot, and is esteemed as a herald of good fortune. In Lancashire this important person must be a dark-complexioned man, otherwise superstitious folk believe that ill-luck will befall the household. In some other parts of England a light-complexioned man is considered a more favourable harbinger of good fortune.

Indeed, there seems to be a great variety of opinion with regard to the complexion

of a "first-foot." In Northumberland a light-haired and flat-footed man is preferred; in Fife, red hair and a flat foot are to be avoided. Sometimes a man is preferred, sometimes a boy; occasionally women are chosen; at other places they are strongly objected to. *Quot homines tot sententiæ* is certainly true with regard to the appearance and sex of the lucky "first-foot." The person who performs this duty in Durham is bound by custom to bring in a piece of coal, a piece of iron, and a bottle of whisky. To each man of the company he gives a glass, and to each woman a kiss.

On these occasions sweetened ale or egg-flip are the prescribed beverages for the drinking of healths when the new year is "brought in." In Banffshire the villagers covered up the peat fire with the ashes and smoothed them down. These were examined in the morning, and if the trace of any resemblance to the print of a foot with the toes pointing to the door could be detected, it was believed that one of the family would die or leave home during the year.

In "Auld Reekie" the custom of first-footing is observed with much enthusiasm. Crowds assemble, as midnight approaches, nigh the old Tron Church, and usher in the new year with much shouting and hand-shaking. Much might be written concerning

the New Year customs of Scotland, but we are concerned chiefly in the consideration of English customs, and must not stray across the Border.

In ancient days the wassail bowl of spiced ale was carried round from house to house by the village maidens, who sang songs and wished every one "a happy new year." In fact, wassail was heard all over the land, from cot to keep, from mansion to monastery, where the *poculum caritatis* was passed round with accustomed rejoicings. The loving cup at our civic feasts, the grace cup at our college "gaudies," are the sole relics of this ancient observance.

The presentation of New Year's and Christmas cards, and of other more costly gifts to friends at this season, is universally practised, and this practice is as old as the time of the Romans. Hone tells us of a remarkable lawsuit arising out of this custom. A poet was commissioned by a Roman pastry-cook to write some mottoes for the New Year's Day bonbons, and agreed to supply five hundred couplets for six livres. Although the poet's eye with fine frenzy rolled, and the couplets were completed in due course, he did not receive the stipulated reward for his labours. Hence the lawsuit, and we trust the poet obtained due compensation. Crackers were

not then invented, but we still have our mottoes, which can thus claim a very respectable antiquity.

The Church endeavoured to overthrow many old customs on account of the superstitions connected with them; and New Year's gifts were objected to because they were originally offered as omens of success for the coming year. Even superstition was supposed to lurk in the benevolent greeting, "A happy new year to you." An old Puritan as late as A.D. 1750, in the poem called "The Popish Kingdom," thus describes the sins of his countrymen :—

"The next to this is New Year's Day, whereon to every friend
They costly presents in do bring, and newe yeare's gifts do sende;
These gifts the husband gives his wife, and father eke the childe,
And master on his men bestowes the like with favour milde;
And good beginning of the yeare they wishe and wishe again,
According to the ancient guise of heathen people vaine."

We need not record how universal was the practice; how Roman citizens gave *strenæ* to each other; how kings and emperors took toll of their subjects; how Henry VI. received his New Year's gifts of food and

jewels, geese, turkeys, hens, and sweetmeats; how Queen Elizabeth was gratified by receiving a vast store of offerings, including caskets studded with gems, necklaces, bracelets, gowns, mantles, smocks, petticoats, mirrors, fans, and a pair of black silk stockings, knitted by Mrs. Montague for her royal mistress, who never afterwards wore cloth hose. New Year's Day is still happily ushered in by the giving of presents, and of cards conveying to us the good wishes of our friends; and we trust that this practice may long continue.

A midnight service is now the most usual manner of ushering in the new year. At Basingstoke it is customary to sing the "Old Hundredth" on the church tower at midnight, at the close of the service. We believe that these Watch Night Services were first introduced by the Wesleyan Methodists, whose example Churchmen have wisely copied, with much benefit to their congregations.

In former days it used to be the fashion for people to exercise their wit by making a rebus out of their name, and they loved to record at once their family and their humour by handing down to posterity the witticism which they had devised. Thus at St. Bartholomew's Church, Smithfield, we see a bar stuck in a barrel, which serves to immortalise the family of Barton. The founder of Queen's

College, Oxford, Robert de Eglesfield, sought to preserve the memory of his good deeds by a similar device, and directed that on New Year's Day a needle and thread, a rebus on his name, *Aiguille et fil* (Eglesfeld), should be given to each member of the College. This custom is performed every year by the bursar of the College, who, according to ancient usage, adds the wholesome moral, "Take this, and be thrifty." This sage counsel is better than the founder's wit, which can scarcely be said to be as sharp as his needle's point. As the students are away from Oxford on New Year's Day, the Fellows and their guests receive the time-honoured gift.

At Skipsea, in Holderness, Yorkshire, the young men gather together at twelve o'clock on New Year's Eve, and, after blackening their faces and otherwise disguising themselves, they pass through the village, each having a piece of chalk. With this chalk they mark the gates, doors, shutters, and waggons with the date of the new year. It is considered lucky to have one's house so dated, and no attempt is ever made to disturb the youths in the execution of their frolic.

There are many old rhymes which were sung by the maidens as they carried from door to door a bowl richly decorated with

evergreens and ribbons, and filled with a compound of ale, roasted apples, and toast, and seasoned with nutmeg and sugar. Here is one from Nottinghamshire, but I know not whether it is still sung :—

"Good master, at your door
Our wassail we begin;
We all are maidens poor,
So we pray you let us in,
And drink our wassail.
All hail, wassail!
Wassail! wassail!
And drink our wassail!"

Halliwell, in his "Popular Rhymes," gives the following, which was sung at Yarmouth, Isle of Wight :[1]—

"Wassal, wassal, to our town;
The cup is white and the ale is brown;
The cup is made of the ashen tree,
And so is the ale of the good barley.
Little maid, little maid, turn the pin,
Open the door and let us in;
God be here, God be there,
I wish you all a happy New Year."

At Oldham, in Lancashire, the wassailers still come round with their bunches of evergreens hung with oranges and apples and

[1] Cf. *Folk-Lore Journal*, 1884, p. 25.

coloured ribbons, and sing the following carol :—

"Here we come a-wassailing
Among the leaves so green;
Here we come a-singing,
So fair to be seen.
For it is in Christmas-time
Strangers travel far and near;
So God bless you, and send you
A happy new year."

Until quite recently, in the same town, a gang of men used to come round "agganowing," and sang a strange ditty, which ran something after this fashion :—

"We're come to give you warning
It's New Year's Day a morning,
With a hey and a how,
And an aggan agganow."

Possibly this may be connected with the old Hagmanay or Hogmanay carol which used to be sung in the North Country at this time of year. Brewer derives the word from the Saxon *hálig monath*, or holy month, and states that King Haco of Norway fixed the feast of Yule on Christmas Day, the eve of which was called Hogg-night, but the Scots were taught by the French to transfer the feast of Yule to the feast of Noel, and Hogg-night has ever since been the eve of New Year's Day.

In the Isle of Man the old custom called the "Quaaltagh" is still partially observed.

The Quaaltagh

In almost every district a party of young men go from house to house singing a rhyme in the Manx language, which translated is as follows:—

"Again we assemble, a merry New Year
To wish to each one of the family here,
Whether man, woman, or girl, or boy,
That long life and happiness all may enjoy.
May they of potatoes and herrings have plenty,
With butter and cheese and each other dainty,
And may their sleep never, by night or by day,
Disturbed be by even the tooth of a flea,
Until at the Quaaltagh again we appear,
To wish you, as now, all a happy New Year."

When these lines are repeated at the door, the party are invited into the house and partake of refreshments. The one who enters first is called the "Quaaltagh," or first-foot, and, as in the northern parts of England, it is essential for good fortune that he should be dark-complexioned. The actors do not assume a fantastic garb like the mummers of England or the guiscards of Scotland, nor are they accompanied by minstrels. As in Banffshire, the housewives in many of the upland cottages, before retiring to bed, spread the ashes smoothly on the hearth, and if in the morning the print of a foot can be detected with the toe pointing towards the door, they believe there will be a death in the family during the year; but if the toe

points in a contrary direction, the family will not fail to have an increase. At St. Albans "Pop Ladies" are cried and sold in the streets, and in parts of Wales children go round showing a "calening" and wishing good luck in return for pence or cake.

Twelfth Night, or Old Christmas Day, was formerly the appointed time for the observance of many old customs which are now defunct. No longer are kings and queens of rural festivals elected by the lot of the bean and the pea hidden in a cake. St. Distaff's Day is no more. We feared that the sounds of rustic revelry had died away when the orchards were wassailed and the ancient rhyme chanted—

"Here's to thee, old apple-tree,
Whence thou may'st bud, and whence thou may'st blow,
And whence thou may'st bear apples enow!
Hats full! caps full!
Bushel—bushel—sacks full,
And my pockets full too! Huzza!"

But we are relieved to find that the apple-wassail has not quite passed away. Three years ago the custom prevailed at Duncton, near Petworth, on the South Downs, and on Old Christmas Eve the voices of the younger villagers sang their lays to the apple-trees, the old "Mistletoe Bough" being one of their favourite ditties. The wassail is sup-

posed to help the growth and abundance of apples for cider-making, and "the oldest inhabitant" can recollect that the custom has been kept up for the last fifty years.

In "Bygone Days in Devonshire and Cornwall," published in 1874, the authoress, Mrs. Whitcombe, states that the above rhyme is still repeated by the farmer's family and friends when gathered round the orchard trees, who sprinkle cider over the roots and hang cake on the branches.

The custom of firing guns under apple-trees is not entirely defunct in Devonshire. In 1889 the custom prevailed at Cullompton. When the parson was popular, the line "old parson's breeches full," was added to the rhyme quoted above.

In Surrey the boys sing the following rhyme under the apple-trees in the Surrey orchards:—

"Here stands a good apple-tree,
Stand fast at root,
Bear well at top;
Every little twig
Bear an apple big:
Every little bough
Bear an apple now;
Hats full! caps full!
Threescore sacks full!
Hullo, boys! hullo!"

We thought, too, that Plough Monday was dead, and that the ploughmen no longer

dragged their ploughs from village to village, dancing while "Bess" rattled her money-box. The money was in pre-Reformation times devoted to the maintenance of the ploughmen's light, which burned before the altar of the Ploughmen's Guild in the chantry of the church. But we are glad to find that Plough Monday is still observed in Cambridgeshire, where bands of young men, profusely ornamented with scarves and ribbons, drag wooden ploughs of a primitive description along the streets. But "Bess," a man dressed as a woman, no longer forms part of this quaint procession. The custom also prevails in Huntingdonshire. At Great Gransden a party of men decked with ribbons go round the village with a decorated plough, repeating in a shrill monotone—

"Remember us poor ploughboys,
A ploughing we must go;
Hail, rain, blow, or snow,
A ploughing we must go."

A few years ago the men used to plough up the lawn, or the scrapers and door-steps, if no money was given.

The Plough Monday play, one of the few remaining specimens of English folk-drama, still survives. It resembles in some points the Christmas and Easter plays, but has several distinguishing features. In the Plough

Monday play there is no St. George, and the principal feature is the sword-dance. In Lincolnshire the actors who drag the plough along are called plough-bullocks; in Yorks they are known as plough-stotts. The play, as performed recently at Wyverton Hall, Nottinghamshire, is printed in "A Cavalier Stronghold," by Mrs. Musters. "Hopper Joe" carries a basket, as if he were going to sow seeds, in which the spectators place money. The sergeant arrays himself in some old uniform, and the young lady always wears a veil; Beelzebub has a blackened face, and either a besom of straw or a club with a bladder fastened at the end. The chief feature of the play is the raising to life of the old woman, whom Beelzebub has knocked down, by the doctor, who is always dressed in the smartest modern clothes, with a riding-whip and a top-hat. Sometimes they wear ribbons and rosettes and feathers stuck in their hats, and the brass ornaments of their horses' harness hanging down in front. Sometimes they have figures of small horses and ploughs in red and black fastened on their dress. One of the mummers in the Lincolnshire Plough Monday procession usually wears a fox's skin in the form of a hood, and "Bessy" a bullock's tail under her gown, which he holds in his hand when dancing.

Plough Monday is also observed in the

City of London, when a special meeting of the Wards takes place, and the Lord Mayor gives a banquet.

There is also the interesting ceremony performed every year at the Chapel Royal, St. James's Palace, when, on behalf of the sovereign, gold, frankincense, and myrrh are presented on the altar in remembrance of the gifts of the Magi to the Infant Saviour.[1]

At Haxey, in North Lincolnshire, on the Feast of the Epiphany, a curious custom prevails. A roll of canvas tightly corded together, about three inches in diameter and two feet long, is thrown down amidst a crowd of rural revellers, and a violent struggle for its possession takes place. It is called the "Haxey Hood," and tradition states that its originator was a Lady Mowbray, who when riding to church lost her hood, which was blown off by a gale of wind. Twelve labourers rushed to capture the lady's head-gear, and caused her much amusement by their eager endeavours. She was so gratified by their civility that she promised to give a piece of ground, still called the Hoodlands, for the purpose of providing a hood to be thrown up annually on Old Christmas Day, and to be contended for on the same spot where her hood had been blown off. Moreover, she ordered that the twelve men should

[1] *Cf.* "Court Customs," *infra.*

be clothed in scarlet jerkins and velvet caps, but the *boggons*, as they are called, are now dressed as morris-dancers. Many people flock to take part in this curious contest, and much excitement prevails. The hood is thrown from the old mill, near the spot where the accident happened, and the villagers strive to kick or carry it, after the manner of a football, to their own hamlet. The *boggons* stand round the field and try to prevent the hood from being taken beyond its boundaries. Should they capture it, it is taken to the chief of the *boggons*, who throws it again from the mill. Whoever succeeds in conveying it to the cellars of any public-house is rewarded by receiving one shilling. The next day the *boggons*, or plough-bullocks, go round dragging a small plough, and collect money, crying "Largess," and run races and wrestle in the evening. This is a curious survival of an ancient custom.

In Suffolk it has always been usual in farmhouses to have furmety at meals, especially at breakfast, during the period from Christmas to Old Christmas Day. In Leicestershire special cakes are given to children on the Epiphany feast. In Worcestershire Epiphany or Old Christmas Day is observed much as Christmas Day itself, and during this season bands of musicians go round

and play at the houses in the neighbourhood.

In the north of Hampshire the old villagers sit up till twelve o'clock on Old Christmas Night, and as soon as they hear the leaves rustling they go to the nearest cow or horse stable to watch the animals stand up and lie down on their other side. The villagers who keep up the custom can no longer explain the meaning of it. The idea of watching the animals arose from the belief that at twelve o'clock on the night of the Nativity oxen knelt in their stalls in honour of the event; and the rustling of the leaves is connected with the tradition that thorn-trees blossom at midnight to commemorate the Saviour's birth. The same beliefs are current in the neighbourhood of Stoneyhurst, Lancashire, where there are not wanting witnesses to the truth of the fact of the midnight blossoming. Cornish folk also believe that sheep turn to the east and bow their heads on Old Christmas Night in memory of the sheep belonging to the shepherds at Bethlehem. They take it also that as the sheep observe this custom on Old Christmas Night, that must be the actual day of the Nativity, and not December 25th. This may be compared to the old Yorkshire custom of watching the beehives on the new and old Christmas Eve, to determine upon the right Christmas

from the humming noise which they suppose the bees will make on the anniversary of the birth of our Saviour.

January 24th, St. Paul's Day, is a holiday with the miners of Cornwall, who call it Paul Pitcher Day, from a custom they have of setting up a water pitcher and pelting it with stones until it is broken. A new one is then brought, and carried to the ale-house to be filled with beer. Throwing broken pitchers and other vessels against the door of the houses is also another favourite amusement of Paul Pitcher Eve. Young men perambulate the village, and exclaim as they throw the sherds—

> "St. Paul's Eve,
> And here's a heave."[1]

St. Valentine's Day, the time-honoured festival of lovers, the theme of poets, has been shorn of its ancient glories, although valentines still adorn the shop-windows on February 14th. The saint was a priest and martyr in Italy in the third century, and why the day of his death should have been selected for the drawing of lots for sweethearts and for sending affectionate greetings is not very evident. The custom seems to have originated in France, whence it migrated

[1] This is mentioned in *Notes and Queries*, 1874, and I gather from Miss Courtney's article in *Folk-Lore* that it still exists.

to Scotland, and thence to England. The first Sunday in Lent was, in ancient times, the usual day for its observance, and that day was generally known as *le jour des valentines*, when the maidens selected their *valentines* as gallants or future husbands. Hence our Valentine's Day is really the "day of valentines," when valentines or gallants were chosen, and is in no way connected with the saint whose feast has been commonly associated with the festival of lovers.[1]

In Leicestershire lozenge-shaped buns, with currants and caraways, called shittles, are given to the old people and children on this day, notably at Glaston and Market Overton (Rutland). The bakers call them "valentine buns."

Some very homely rhymes are still sent by rural lovers to their adored ones. From Islip, Oxfordshire, we have the following:—

"Come, my little sogar dear,
Wash your face and curl your hair,
And you'll be mine and I'll be thine,
And so good-morrow, Valentine.
As I sat in my garden chair,
I saw two birds fly in the air,
And two by two and pair by pair,
Which made me think of you, my dear."

[1] *Cf.* a note by F. Chance in *Notes and Queries*, 7th Series, v., Feb. 18, 1888.

It is not necessary to record the ancient customs which prevailed on this day, long since obsolete, when fair maidens refused to open their eyes until their favourite admirers appeared and claimed the privilege of being their valentine for the year, or when a happy youth drew by lot the name of some girl whom he was bound by all the laws of St. Valentine to admire and serve as her gallant lover. The written valentine was of later growth, and many a fate has the following effusion sealed :—

"The rose is red, the violet blue,
The pink is sweet, and so are you.
Thou art my love, and I am thine;
I drew thee to my valentine;
The lot was cast, and then I drew,
And fortune said it should be you."

The boys of Berkshire are more practical, and use the opportunity for collecting small bribes, repeating the following rhyme :—

"Knock the kittle agin the pan,
Gie us a penny if 'e can;
We be ragged an' you be vine,
Plaze to gie us a valentine.
Up wi' the kittle and down wi' the spout,
Gie us a penny an' we'll gie out."

The meaning of "we'll gie out" appears to be "we'll stop singing."

At the village of High Roding, Essex, the

children, according to ancient custom, visit the houses of the residents and sing with great glee the lines—

"Good morning to your valentine,
Curl your locks as I do mine;
Two before and two behind,
Good morning to your valentine.
I only come but once a year,
Pray give me some money as I stand here,
A piece of cake or a glass of wine,
Good morning to your valentine."

Among the gratuities distributed are the usual batch of bright new sixpences, one of which is given to every child in the parish who presents himself or herself at the Ware Farm at eight A.M. on Valentine's Day. The same verses are sung at Duxford, Cambridge.

In East Anglia it is customary to leave small presents on the doorstep, to ring the bell violently, and then run away. It is not always easy to transplant old customs, and I can well remember the trouble which a Suffolk doctor brought upon himself, who, on removing to a northern county, tried to gain the affections of his new patients by introducing this harmless pleasantry. The natives did not understand the custom, and thought that it might be connected with the first of April.

Hurling

A remarkable set of verses comes from Northrepps, where the children sing :—

"Good morrow, Valentine!
How it do Hail!
When Father's pig die,
You shall ha' its tail.

Good morrow, Valentine!
How thundering Hot!
When Father's pig die,
You shall ha' its jot."

The jot is the tripe of the pig, considered a delicacy by Norfolk poor people.

The annual custom of holding a hurling match continues at St. Ives, Cornwall, and is observed on the Monday after the feast day which falls on Quinquagesima Sunday. It is scarcely necessary to describe the old game of hurling, which resembles a Rugby game of football without the kicking of the ball. The ball is about the size of a cricket-ball, formed of cork or light wood. It is certainly "a play verily both rude and rough," as an old writer aptly describes it. Formerly village fought with village at these annual hurling matches; but probably on account of the severe rivalry and ferocity displayed these contests were discontinued. But at St. Ives one part of a parish plays against another on the sands on the day of the feast. All the

Toms, Wills, and Johns are on one side, while those having other Christian names range themselves on the other. At St. Columb the towns-folk contend against the country-folk; at Truro the married men with the unmarried; and at Helston two streets with all the other streets. This takes place on May 2nd, when the boundaries of the town are perambulated.

CHAPTER III

Lenten customs — Shrove Tuesday — Pancake-bell—Shroving—Tossing pancakes at Westminster —Devonshire rhymes— Welsh survival of thrashing the hen—Coquilles at Norwich—Football on Shrove Monday—Mothering Sunday—Simnels—Care Sunday—Palm Sunday and ball-play—Fig Sunday—Spy Wednesday—Maundy Thursday—Good Friday and hot cross buns—Skipping on Good Friday and marbles—Guildford custom—Custom at St. Bartholomew's Church, London—Blue-Coat School custom — Flogging Judas—Cornish custom of gathering shell-fish — St. David's Day.

THE season of Lent has many customs which linger on. It is ushered in by Shrove Tuesday, when in ancient times the people flocked to the confessional to be shriven, or shrove, before the great fast commenced. We have nothing in this country which corresponds with the Carnival on the Continent, although something of the same kind of festivity was once practised here, as an old writer testifies :—

"Some run about the streets attired like monks, and some like kings,
Accompanied with pomp and guard, and other stately things ;

Some like wild beasts do run abroad in skins that divers be
Arrayed, and eke with loathsome shapes, that dreadful are to see;
They counterfeit both bears and wolves, and lions fierce in sight,
And raging bulls; some play the cranes, with wings and stilts upright."

Our modern carnival is a much less riotous proceeding, and generally resolves itself into eating pancakes. Shrove Tuesday is often called "Pancake Day," and at many places a bell is rung which is called "pancake-bell." This bell formerly called the faithful to the confessional.

At Culworth, Northamptonshire, and at Crowle, Lincolnshire, the pancake-bell may still be heard, and also at the pretty village of Church Minshull, Cheshire, and at Morley, near Leeds, the old custom has been observed without intermission for over a hundred years.[1]

The children in Berkshire have still their rhymes which they sing on this day, and receive their accustomed bribes. At Purley they say—

"Knick-knock, pan's hot,
I'm come a-shroving;
Bit of bread and a bit of cheese,
That's better than nothing.

[1] *Cf.* "Bell Customs." At numerous churches in Leicestershire and Rutlandshire the bell is rung.

Last year's flour's dear
That's what makes poor Purley children come shroving here.
Hip, hip, hurrah!
Up with the pitcher and down with the pan,
Give me a penny and I'll be gone."

At Baldon, Oxfordshire, a similar rhyme is sung:—

"Pit-a-pat, the pan's hot,
I be come a-shroving;
Catch a fish afore the net,
That's better than nothing.
Eggs, lard, and flour's dear,
This makes me come a-shroving here."

These rhymes have many variants, which need not now be enumerated. They may be heard in various forms in all the Southern and Midland counties. Sometimes the shroving children have unpleasant ways of signifying their displeasure should the accustomed gift be not forthcoming. This they do by throwing stones at the door and singing—

"Skit-scat, skit-scat,
Take this, and take that,"

or by tying a stone to the door handle.

The origin of eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday has been much disputed. The following suggestion by a learned ecclesiastic of the Roman Church possibly contains the

explanation of the custom. "When Lent was kept by a strict abstinence from meat all through the forty days, it was customary to use up all the dripping and lard in the making of pancakes. To consume all, it was usual to call in the apprentice-boys and others about the house, and they were summoned by a bell, which was naturally called 'pancake-bell.'"[1]

An interesting survival of "tossing the pancake" exists at Westminster School, and is accompanied with several quaint observances. The cook, bearing a frying-pan with a pancake, is conducted by a verger carrying the silver mace from the college kitchen to the great schoolroom, when all the boys are assembled. The cook tries to toss the pancake over an iron bar which runs across the schoolroom from one wall to another. If the pancake goes clear over, the boys make a rush and try each to catch it whole. The boy who gets it whole receives a guinea from the Dean on showing it in an unbroken condition. The cook also receives ten shillings if he does his part properly. Now-a-days, only so many boys join in the struggle for the pancake as there are forms in the school. Each form names a representative. Formerly the whole school made a rush, which was rather a dangerous sport, and very wisely the

[1] *Notes and Queries*, 8th Series, i., March 5, 1892.

number of competitors for the prize has been limited.

From Bridestowe, Devonshire, we have received a few simple rhymes, written by a girl in the village as they are usually sung. The words are :—

"Lain crock, pancake, fritter for our labour,
Dish o' meal, piece of bread, or what you please to give me.
I see by the string
There's a good thing in;
I see by the latch
There's something to catch.
Trip a trap tro!
Give me my hump and I'll be go.
Nine times, ten times, men come shroving,
Pray, dame, something, an apple or a dumpling,
Or a piece of chuckle cheese of your own making,
Or a piece of pancake of your own baking.
Trip a trap tro! &c."

In some parts of Wales there is a custom of casting thin lead figures of birds and animals, which are set up and thrown at by boys with chunks of lead on Shrove Tuesday. Whatever the shape of the figure may be, it is called "a bird." If it is knocked down, it becomes the property of the thrower, but every chunk of lead that fails to knock down a bird is claimed by the owner of the bird. This is probably a survival of the ancient and cruel sport of threshing the hen, thus

mentioned by Tusser in his "Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry:"—

"Come, go to the barn now, my jolly ploughmen,
Blindfolded, and speedily thresh the fat hen;
And if you can kill her, then give her thy men,
And go ye on fritters and pancakes dine then."

Well might a foreign visitor to our shores sagely remark that "the English eat a certain cake on Shrove Tuesday, upon which they immediately run mad and kill their poor cocks."

At Norwich a custom prevails of selling at the bakers' and confectioners' shops a small currant-loaf called a "coquille," which the boys also cry in the streets. A notice at the shops runs as follows:—"Hot coquilles on Tuesday morning at eight o'clock, and in the afternoon at four o'clock." Probably the word is derived from its shell-like shape (*coquille* = shell); but another authority connects it with "coquerell" or cock, and supposes that the cake was sold when the old sport of throwing at cocks was in vogue on this day.

Shrove Tuesday is a day celebrated for its famous football encounters, which are not, like ordinary games, fought out on a level field between goal-posts, but are entirely of another character. At Sedgefield the church clerk and sexton had, according to imme-

morial custom, to find a ball to be played for by the trades-folk and villagers on this day. The goal of the former is at the south of the village, that of the latter is a pond at the north end. The ball is put through the bull-ring in the middle of the village. The game always begins at one o'clock, and is fought out for three or four hours with much ferocity. There are no rules of "off-side," or of "no charging or hacking allowed." All is fair in love or war, and also in the old-fashioned football of England and Scotland. At Chester-le-Street they have an annual match between the "up-street" and "down-street" folk on Shrove Tuesday. The contest takes place in the street, the windows being all carefully barricaded; and a burn lies in the course of the players, who rush into the water, and enjoy a fine scrimmage there. At Alnwick the contest used to take place in the street, but the Duke of Northumberland instituted an annual match, which now takes place in "the Pasture" every Shrove Tuesday between the parishioners of the two parishes of St. Michael and St. Paul. The committee receives the ball at the barbican of the castle from the porter, and march to the field headed by the Duke's piper, where the contest takes place, after which a fine struggle takes place for the possession of the ball. In Scotland, the streets of Duns

are enlivened by a game of handball on Fasten E'en. The ball is started in state by the lord of the manor, and the goals are the kirk and the mill.

The football on Shrove Tuesday is still played at Dorking in the streets, as in the days of yore. The tradesmen wisely barricade their shops, and a collection is made during the morning throughout the streets, nominally to defray the cost of damages. The footballers first parade the streets clad in grotesque costumes, and bands of music accompany the procession. The football is kicked off in the centre of the High Street at two o'clock, and all who wish join in the game. The play is furious and the ball is kicked everywhere, sometimes reaching the fields at the outskirts of the town. During four hours the contest lasts, and towards the end of the struggle there is much excitement and vigorous kicking, extremely dangerous to the limbs of the competitors. The old custom of tolling the pancake-bell during the morning has now been discontinued.

"Clipping of churches" was formerly practised in Wiltshire, when the children joined hands round the church, walked round three times, and repeated the lines—

"Shrove Tuesday, Shrove Tuesday, poor Jack went to plough,
His mother made pancakes, she scarcely knew how;

She tossed them, she turned them, she made them so black,
With soot from the chimney that poisoned poor Jack."

This rhyme was current in Shropshire ten years ago, and is probably still existing.

In Cornwall all the mischief inherent in human nature used to be called into play on this day. Women rubbed the faces of passers-by with sooty hands; people threw water over everybody they came into contact with; knockers were wrenched off; gates unhung and carried away; boys prowled the streets on "Nickanan Night" with clubs, like imps of darkness, beating at doors, and carrying off whatever they could seize, and many other pleasant attentions were paid by friendly neighbours in order to keep up old customs and to promote the happiness of mankind! Happily these have passed away, and the former victims of such pleasantries will not regret their departure.

The voice of rural revelry is hushed during the first few weeks of Lent, and no popular customs break the stillness of the spring-time fast until Mid-Lent Sunday is reached. This day has several pleasing associations. It is called "Mothering Sunday," and from early times it has been the custom for children who were absent from home in service to visit their parents on this day. This prac-

tice arose from an ancient ordinance of the Church requiring the priests and people to visit the mother-church of the district on Mothering Sunday, and long ago this ecclesiastical custom became generally associated with the pleasant gathering of families and the renewing of the ties of home life. Herrick sang of this custom in his beautiful poem—

> "I'll to thee a simnell bring,
> 'Gainst thou go'st a mothering;
> So that when she blesseth thee,
> Half the blessing thou'lt give me."

It is satisfactory to know that this custom of "Merrie England" still prevails in some of the rural parts of Gloucestershire and also in Radnorshire. At Selsby, near Stroud, the servants are accustomed to ask for leave of absence on this day, pleading that it is Mothering Sunday, and a certain cake coated with white and embellished with pink is partaken of. At Wotton-under-Edge, in the same county, the festival is observed at the "Swan Inn," where cake and wine are provided for all the servants, who are allowed to bring with them their friends and sweethearts. In the district of Rossendale Mothering Sunday is still the day for the gathering of scattered members of families, and it is customary there to make a "Fag," *i.e.*, a

fig-pie, for this special social entertainment. As a family festival the day is observed in Leicestershire, and young people flock homewards and eat veal and furmety.

The day is still observed in Worcestershire. At Stoulton, children return home for the day, and often bring a present to their parents; and often families make a point of attending church. Veal is the appointed viand of the day, and consequently it is in great demand.

This Sunday is also called Simnel Sunday, so named from the special cakes eaten on that day. The word Simnel is derived from the Latin word *simila*,[1] signifying fine wheat-flour, and not from the fictitious personages Simon and Nell whom popular tradition has credited with the manufacture of the first Simnel. Even Lambert Simnel, the pretender, who was by trade a baker, has been credited with the invention. Bury, in Lancashire, is the great place for these cakes, which often resemble the largest wedding-cake, and the custom of eating them on this day is prevalent throughout Lancashire. The streets of Bury used to be blocked with stalls, on which were displayed simnels of various sorts, and crowds assembled from all the surrounding neighbourhood.

Passion Sunday, the second before Easter,

[1] *Cf.* German word *Semmel*, signifying a roll of best bread.

is also called Care Sunday, according to the old Nottinghamshire rhyme—

> "Care Sunday, care away,
> Palm Sunday and Easter Day."

Why it is so named is a disputed question. Some derive it from the word *karr*, signifying a satisfaction for a debt, alluding to the satisfaction made by our Saviour; others connect it with *carl* or *ceorl*, meaning a husbandman.[1] At any rate, the custom of eating "carling peas," *i.e.*, peas fried in butter with vinegar and pepper, exists still in Yorkshire and Northumberland.

Palm Sunday has several interesting customs which commemorate the triumphant entry of our Lord into Jerusalem, when the people took branches of palm-trees and scattered them in the way. In Wiltshire "palms," or branches of willow and hazel, are carried to Martinsell, a hill near Marlborough. A curious game is usually played there on this day, consisting in hitting a ball gradually up the steep slope of the hill to the summit with crooked sticks. A line of boys with bandy or hockey sticks in their hands are ranged on the northern side of the hill, one above the other; they hit or "pass" a ball up from one boy to the other till it reaches

[1] The derivation of *care* has been much disputed. *Cf.* Hampson's "Med. Œvi. Kalend.," and Dyer's "Popular Customs."

the last boy, who knocks it to the top, whence it falls to the bottom of the hill and the game recommences. A similar game is played at Roundway Hill.

In very many places "palms" are worn on Palm Sunday. In some villages it is known as "Fig Sunday." At Edlesborough, Buckinghamshire, the children procure figs, and nearly every house has a fig-pudding. For some days beforehand the shop-windows of the neighbouring town of Dunstable are full of figs, and on Palm Sunday crowds go to the top of Dunstable Downs, one of the highest points in the neighbourhood, and eat figs. Nor is this custom confined to Buckinghamshire; until quite lately people used to assemble on Silbury Hill on the same Sunday and eat figs, and fig-puddings were much in vogue.

The custom of observing "Fig Sunday" prevails in the counties of Bedford, Bucks, Hertford, Northampton, Oxford, Wilts, and North Wales. At Kempton, in Hertfordshire, it has long been the custom for the people to eat figs—"keep warsel"—and make merry with their friends on Palm Sunday. More figs are sold in the shops on the few days previous to the festival than in all the year beside. Probably it is connected with the withering of the barren fig-tree, the account of which immediately follows the

narrative of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Amongst the Irish Roman Catholics the Wednesday in Holy Week is known as Spy Wednesday, the spy being Judas, who betrayed our Lord.[1] The Thursday in Holy Week, commonly called Maundy Thursday, is observed at Court by the presentation of the royal Maundy gifts to poor people.[2] A full account of the ceremony is given in the chapter relating to Court Customs. The word Maundy is derived from the Latin word *mandatum*,[3] and refers to the command of our Lord to His Apostles to imitate His example in the humility which He showed in washing the feet of His disciples.

Good Friday has very many customs connected with it which abound in interest. Every one is familiar with the practice of eating hot cross buns on this day, and the well-known rhyme, which has several variants—

"One a penny, two a penny,
Hot cross buns;
If you have no daughters,
Give them to your sons;
But if you have none of these merry little elves,
Then you may keep them all for yourselves."

[1] *Notes and Queries.* [2] *Cf.* "Court Customs," p. 257.

[3] According to Archdeacon Nares, *Maundy* is derived from the *maund*, a corruption of the Saxon *mand*, a basket.

Hot Cross Buns

This custom is as old as the Romans, who were accustomed to present to their gods consecrated bread. Two loaves were discovered at Herculaneum marked by a cross. The Romans divided their sacred cakes with lines intersecting each other at right angles, and called the quarters *quadra.*[1] The cross on the buns eaten on Good Friday now has another meaning.

In Worcestershire hot cross buns made on this day are supposed never to become mouldy, and a loaf made and baked on Good Friday, and hung in the kitchen, averts ill-luck, and when grated is an excellent remedy for various illnesses.

Much has been written concerning the origin of hot cross buns. The Romans made their sacred cakes in honour of Diana, whose festival was observed soon after the vernal equinox. The original home of the custom, where it is chiefly observed, is Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. There the old Roman roads the Ickneld Street and the Armynge Street crossed. There stood in Roman times the altar of Diana of the Crossways, to whom the Romans offered their sacred cakes. There, too, the custom of eating hot cross buns is chiefly observed, whereas in many parts of England (*e.g.*, Bath)

[1] Northall's "English Folk-Rhymes." *Cf.* Virgil, *Æn.* bk. vii.; Martial, bk. iii. *Epig.* 77.

they are quite unknown. This is a curious survival of the Roman times.

The strange custom of skipping on Good Friday prevails at Brighton, though it is rapidly falling into disuse. Twenty years ago the whole fishing community engaged in this amusement during the whole day. It was generally practised with a long rope, from six to ten grown-up people skipping at one rope. Five years ago an elderly man was observed indulging in this pastime, and the day is known as "Long Rope Day."

Playing marbles on Good Friday is also a curious local custom practised in nearly all the Sussex villages by both boys and men. It is considered quite as wrong to omit this solemn duty as to go without the Christmas pudding or to neglect any other imperative observance. No one knows why they play marbles on Good Friday.

No one knows why the good people of Guildford, Surrey, make a pilgrimage to St. Martha's Hill on Good Friday, where, on one of the most beautiful spots in Surrey, near the old Norman church, crowds collect and pass the time in singing and dancing. The latter have been discontinued during recent years; still many people flock thither, but they are chiefly the old folks who make this pilgrimage. St. Martha's Church is an old pilgrim church, whither the faithful used to go when

they were on their way to the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury. Martha's Hill is said to be a corruption of Martyr's Hill, and the visit of the Guildford folk to this spot is, doubtless, a relic of some ancient religious ceremony or pilgrimage.

Old customs die hard in the City of London. In the parish of St. Bartholomew the Great, twenty-one aged widows receive on Good Friday the means wherewith to remember the piety of a nameless benefactor. According to time-honoured custom, they attend service in the parish church, then walk in procession to the long-disused graveyard adjoining, and proceed to pick off a particular tombstone a new sixpence, deposited there by the churchwarden; and finally, on leaving the scene of this quaint ceremony, are presented with a hot cross bun. Any widow who is incapable through the stiffness of her joints to pick up the coin is not entitled to receive it. The name of the pious citizen has been lost, as all the records of the period were destroyed in the Great Fire. The fund from which this bequest is derived has unfortunately been diverted, but by the liberality of a civic antiquary the custom is preserved, and the poor widows still receive their sixpence. Another quaint ceremony is regularly performed on Good Friday. Three hundred years ago, Peter Symonds, a worthy

Londoner of the days of Queen Elizabeth, devised a sum of money to be bestowed on Good Friday to the youngest boys of the Blue-Coat School, in the shape of sixty new pennies and sixty packets of raisins. The children and poor of the City parishes also benefit by the same will, and the money used to be given over the tomb of the donor, until the railway in Liverpool Street effaced the spot.

The curious custom of flogging Judas Iscariot, though not an English practice, may be witnessed in any of our ports, if any Portuguese or South American vessels are in the harbour. An effigy is made of the Betrayer, which is ducked in the dock, and then kicked and lashed with knotted ropes, amid the shouts and the singing of a weird, rude chant by the spectators.

In the far west an old Cornish custom still survives at St. Constantine. On Good Friday crowds flock to Helford River to gather shellfish (limpets, cockles, &c.). This gathering of shellfish on Good Friday, usually winkles from the sea, was once very prevalent all over the county. The origin of this custom I dare not attempt to determine. (*Folk-Lore.*)

March 1st is St. David's Day, a festival dear to all patriotic Welshmen. The wearing and eating of the leek is a common form

of designating the true Taffy. In the chapter on army customs we have mentioned some of the quaint ceremonies of the Welsh Fusileers on this day. At Jesus College, Oxford, much frequented by Welshmen, the undergraduates wear leeks, and the Fellows usually have a dinner, at which the guests wear artificial leeks in their button-holes.

CHAPTER IV

Easter customs—Pace eggs—Clapping for eggs in Wales—Pace-egg play—Biddenden custom—Kentish pudding-pies—Hallaton hare-pie and bottle kicking—School customs—St. Mark's Day and ghosts—Custom at St. Mary's, Woolnoth—Hocklide at Hungerford—All Fools' Day.

THE Feast of the Resurrection is remarkable for the almost universal practice of giving Pace eggs. The word Pace is derived from *Pasche* or *Paschal*, and we find it under the various forms of *pas*, *pays*, *pasce*, *pask*, *pasch*, *passhe*, and many others. The imagination of some antiquarians has caused them to see in the Paschal egg a symbol or emblem of the Resurrection, and to pronounce the custom to be of Christian origin. But it is far older than Christianity, and is common to Norse nations. In the old sagas the earth was symbolised by an egg; in the ancient worship of Baal eggs played a part; and in all probability the Christian teachers, finding that the people were devoted to the custom, diverted from it the old heathen notions and attached to it Christian ideas and beliefs. Egyptians,

Persians, Greeks, and Romans all shared in the symbolical use of eggs, and the Parsees even now distribute red eggs at their spring festival. Old Pace eggs in our own country were hard-boiled and dyed with various colours, with names and "sentiments" imprinted on them. They were dyed with logwood, onion skins, pieces of coloured rags, and furze flowers, and yellow, violet, and pink were the common colours. Now aniline dyes are used. Formerly the eggs were blessed by a priest. In Yorkshire the children roll their highly-coloured eggs against one another in fields and gardens. The lads buy eggs and press them in the streets against each other.

In Anglesey, North Wales, the children go from house to house from the Monday to the Saturday during Easter Week, clapping until the door is opened to them. Formerly they used to recite the following lines:—

"Clap, clap, dau ŵy
I hogyn bach ar y plwy,"

the literal meaning of which is, "Clap, clap, (give) two eggs to little lad on parish."

The custom is not confined to poor children, as the children of well-to-do parents join in the practice.[1] When no eggs are forthcoming, each child receives a penny.

[1] By the kindness of Lady Read I have in my possession a clapper which was used in the parish of Llanfechall last Easter.

In Carnarvonshire the custom is but a memory; eighty years ago the clerk of the parish used to go round with a basket collecting Easter eggs, accompanied by boys clapping.

This custom was not confined to Wales. In Lancashire and Cheshire the custom of Pace-egging is very common. "Please, good dame, an Aister egg," is heard everywhere, but money is now frequently given in place of eggs. At Wilmslow the old rhyme used to be—

> "Please Mr. ——
> Please give us an Easter egg.
> If you do not give us one,
> Your hen shall lay an addled one,
> Your cock shall lay a stone."

The boys roll the eggs like bowls, and at Preston Park hundreds of people may be seen engaged in rolling eggs down the grassy slope.

In Northumberland, when a man asks a woman for an egg, if she refuses, he takes off her boots until she pays a penalty. If a man refuses to give a woman a Pace-egg, she snatches away his cap, and will not restore it until he pays a money forfeit.

Easter eggs were in mediæval times blessed by the priest, and this form of benediction was authorised by Pope Paul V.:—"Bless, Lord, we beseech Thee, this Thy creature of

eggs, that it may become a wholesome sustenance to Thy faithful servants, eating it in thankfulness to Thee, on account of the resurrection of our Lord." The red dye used to colour the egg was supposed to allude to the blood of the redemption.

In connection with Pace-egging there is the Pace-egg or Easter play, which resembles in its main features the Christmas mumming play. In this piece of ancient drama folklorists see a relic of old Norse mythology—the contest of Thor and Balder, of spring with winter. Beau Slasher is the champion of winter, and his iron head, steel body, and hands and feet made of knuckle-bones, are descriptive of the frost-bound earth. These interpretations seem somewhat fanciful.

Biddenden, a quiet and retired Kentish village, presents every Easter the same spectacle on a larger scale that it did on Paschal Sunday about the time of the Norman Conquest. At the beginning of the twelfth century there lived in Biddenden two twin-sisters—Eliza and Mary Chalkhurst—who were the precursors of the Siamese Twins.[1] They were joined together in the

[1] One of these cakes is engraved in Ducarel's "Repertory of the Dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester," 1782, p. 137; and another pattern is given in Hone's "Every-Day Book," vol. ii. p. 443. Hasted regards the notion that the sisters were joined together as a vulgar tradition arising from the figures on the cakes, and says that their real name was Preston.

back by two ligaments, and after they had passed a joint existence of thirty-five years one of them died. The other was advised to have the cords of unity dissevered, but she refused, saying, "As we came together, so also shall we go together." Six hours afterwards she died. By their will they bequeathed to the churchwardens of the parish certain lands, of which the rents were to be devoted to supplying the poor with doles of bread and cheese every Easter Sunday. The income now amounts to about £40. Visitors from neighbouring places flock to the village, which is turned into a kind of fair, after the services in the church have been celebrated by the vicar. There are two distributions under the will of the united sisters. In the first place, a thousand hard-baked rolls, each stamped with a representation of the foundresses of the feast, are distributed among visitors who may be in want of refreshment. They are very durable, as they are as hard as wood, and may be kept as curiosities for twenty years. The second distribution consists of loaves and cheese, and is limited to the poor of the village. One of the churchwardens sits at a little window of the workhouse, and to each of the poor parishioners who march past in single file he hands a loaf and a large piece of cheese. The

ceremony finished, many of the visitors attempt to soften their cakes in Kentish ale, and pass the rest of the day in old-world conviviality. Biddenden then resumes its accustomed quietude until the memory of the twin-sisters is again celebrated.

The "Kentish men" still eat *pudding-pies* at Easter, a kind of flat tart with a raised crust to hold a small quantity of custard, with currants sprinkled over its surface. Bands of young folk used to roam the countryside provided with this form of refreshment on the Monday and Tuesday of Easter Week. (*Kentish Express.*)

Another curious observance is the Hallaton Hare-scramble and Bottle-kicking, which takes place annually on Easter Monday. An eye-witness shall describe the strange scene:—"The origin of the custom associated with the hare-pie scramble is lost in the mists of antiquity, and may be a relic of mediæval times, similar to the old 'Whipping Toms' in Leicester, put down in 1847.[1] At all events, at a remote period a piece of land was bequeathed to the rector, conditionally that he and his successors

[1] "Whipping Toms" was a rough pastime which required the aid of an Act of Parliament to suppress it. After a hockey match the young men armed themselves with long cart-whips, and proceeded to whip any one passing through the precincts of Leicester Castle, unless they received a fee from their victim.

provided annually two hare-pies, a quantity of ale, and two dozen penny loaves, to be scrambled for on each succeeding Easter Monday at the rising ground called Hare-pie Bank, about a quarter of a mile south of the village. Of course, hares being out of season at this time of the year, pies of mutton, veal, and bacon are substituted. A benevolent rector of the last century made an effort to have the funds applied to a better use; but the village wags were equal to the occasion, and raised the cry, and chalked on his walls and door, as well as on the church, 'No pie, no parson, and a job for the glazier.' Other subsequent efforts alike failed. Easter Monday at Hallaton is the great carnival of the year. The two benefit societies hold their anniversary at the 'Royal Oak' and the 'Fox Inn,' and bands accompany the processions to the parish church, where the 'club sermon' is preached. After dinner at the inns, a deputation is sent to the rectory for the 'pies and beer,' and then the procession is formed in the following order:—

"Two men abreast, carrying two sacks with the pies cut up.

"Three men abreast, carrying aloft a bottle each; two of these are filled with beer; they are ordinary field wood bottles, but without the usual mouth, iron-hooped all over, with

a hole left for drinking from; the third is a dummy. Occasionally a hare is carried, in a sitting posture, mounted on the top of a pole.

"The procession increases greatly in numbers as it approaches Hare-pie Bank, where the pies are pitched out of the sack and scrambled for. The spectators amuse themselves by throwing the contents of the pies at each other. Then follows the well-known 'Hallaton bottle-kicking.' One of the large bottles containing ale is thrown into the circular hollow on the mound, and the 'Medbourne men,' or other villagers who care to join in the sport, try to wrest the bottle from the Hallatonian grasp. A fierce contest then ensues, in comparison with which a football scrimmage is mere child's play. It is useless to describe the battle that ensues, the Hallatonians striving to kick the bottle to their boundary-line over the brook adjoining the village, while their opponents endeavour to convey it towards the Medbourne boundary. The victors of course claim the contents of the bottle. Then 'the dummy' is fought for with unabated zest, for the Hallaton people boast that this has never been wrested from them. The third bottle is taken in triumph to the market-cross and its contents drunk with accustomed honours. The bottles are carefully kept

from year to year, and those now in use have done duty for more than thirty years."[1]

The author of the "Folk-lore of Leicestershire" in an able paper[2] has shown a connection between the Christian festival of Easter and the worship or sacrifice of hares. Certain evidence of this exists here in England. At Coleshill, Warwickshire, it used to be customary for the young men of the parish to try to catch a hare before ten o'clock on Easter Monday and bring it to the parson; if they were successful, the parson was bound to give them a calf's-head and a hundred of eggs for their breakfast and a groat in money.

The custom of hunting the hare at Leicester on Easter Monday also supports the theory, on which day the mayor and his brethren in their scarlet gowns, attended by their proper officers, used to go to Black-Annis' Bower Close and witness the diversion of hunting a hare. But as unfortunately there was no hare to be hunted, the sport degenerated into trailing a dead cat soaked in aniseed water before a pack of hounds, amidst the shouts of the spectators. This early form of drag-hunting has been long ago abandoned, but an annual fair on the Danes' Hills and the Fosse Road, held on Easter Monday, has

[1] "County Folk-lore: Leicestershire and Rutland," by C. J. Billson, 1895.

[2] *Folk-Lore*, December 1892.

preserved until recent years the traces of the Leicester hare-hunt.

The writer, Mr. Billson, brings forward much evidence to prove that "the hare was originally a totem, or divine animal, among the local aborigines, and that the customs at Leicester and Hallaton are relics of the religious procession and annual sacrifice of the god." He also sees in the "bottle-kicking" a relic of the "carrying out Death," which is practised in some form in many European countries. Something is taken to represent Death, a log of wood or a figure of straw; this is carried out of the village and destroyed in some way. This ceremony usually takes place in the spring, signifying the destruction of winter, the symbol of Death. Then on Easter Monday at Ashton-under-Lyne there is the custom of "Riding the Black Lad;" in which case the effigy of a black boy, after being carried round the town and shot at, is finally burned.[1] The whole subject is full of interest, and we refer our readers to Mr. Billson's article, as we are now concerned more with the account of existing customs rather than deductions from them.

School customs are always full of interest. Many have died, especially at Eton, where one would have imagined they would be scrupu-

[1] "Denham Tracts," vol. i., Folk-Lore Society, 1891.

lously observed. An ancient usage prevails at Christ's Hospital, London, on Easter Tuesday, when the boys visit the Mansion House, and receive from the Lord Mayor the customary Easter gifts. Coins fresh from the mint are given to the boys: to each Grecian one guinea, to the Junior Grecians half-a-guinea, to the monitors half-a-crown, while the rank and file receive one shilling. Buns are given to each boy, and also a glass of lemonade instead of the wine which they received formerly. In a Northern grammar-school the boys used to attend the ceremony of the installation of the Mayor, and were regaled with punch and buns. Moreover, they were obliged to sin against grammar as well as temperance principles, for they were called upon to drink the toast—

"Prosperation (*sic*)
To the Corporation."

The toast and the punch and the custom have been discontinued during the last twenty years. The Christ's Hospital boys, after the ceremony, accompany the Lord Mayor and the Corporation of the City of London to Christ's Church, Newgate Street, where the Spital sermon is preached. This used to be called the Second Spital Sermon, the first being preached on the Monday; but this has been discontinued.

The old Eton Montem has been dead some years, and was last celebrated in 1844. It was a procession of the scholars, dressed either in military or fancy costume, to the *mons*, or Salt-hill, where they levied a tax, called "salt," on all comers. Some relics of this custom are preserved in the observances on the famous Fourth of June, when the members of the Boats, and especially the coxswains, wear extraordinary dresses, said to be captains' and midshipmen's uniforms. The old Montem is supposed to be connected with the boy-bishop, and originally took place on the Feast of St. Nicholas.

On the eve of the Feast of St. Mark (April 25th), Yorkshire folk sit and watch in the porches of churches from 11 P.M. to 1 A.M. It is supposed that the ghosts of all who will die during the following year pass into the church. People sometimes say in case of the illness of a neighbour, that he will not recover as his ghost was seen last St. Martin's Eve; and sometimes this superstition has caused death, on account of the terror which the prophecy inspired. (*Folk-Lore.*)

A curious custom is observed at Easter at St. Mary Woolnoth, Lombard Street, London. As the congregation leave the church, an Easter egg, coloured, and with the words "My Redeemer" written on it, is presented to every one.

"Heaving" is, we believe, quite extinct. Many men little past middle age can remember how on Easter Monday the men used to lift the women whom they met thrice above their heads, and the women responded on Easter Tuesday and lifted the men. In spite of many inquiries, we can find no evidence[1] of the continued existence of this custom, which prevailed greatly in the North of England, and also in Wales, Warwickshire, and Shropshire.

A fortnight after Easter comes the once famous Hock-tide, a very popular festival in former days, but now little observed. Only in one town have some of the humours of Hock-tide been preserved. Hungerford, Berks, still maintains its ancient and curious customs, which not even the new District and Parish Councils Act has been able to affect. Hungerford is an old-world town, governed, not by a mayor and town-council, like other modern mushroom corporations, but by a high constable, assisted by a port-reeve, bailiff, tything or tutti men, hayward, &c. Moreover, John of Gaunt was the great patron of the town, and gave it a wonderful horn, upon the safe preservation of which the

[1] As late as the year 1883 a relic of this custom was observed at Norton, Cheshire, where a man entered a house to "lift" the wife of the owner. The latter objected, and summoned the observer of old customs, who had to pay the costs of the prosecution.

rights of the town depend. The proceedings of Hock-tide commence with the watercress supper at the hotel of the "John o' Gaunt," consisting of black broth, welsh rabbit, maccaroni, and salad, accompanied by bowls of punch. During the meal the affairs of the township are discussed. On Tuesday, "Hockney Day," the proceedings commence by the town-crier blowing from the balcony of the town-hall the ancient horn, the gift of John of Gaunt. The Hock-tide Court assemble, the jury is sworn, the names of the free suitors are called over by the town-clerk, and the commoners summoned to "save their commons" for the ensuing year. Various officers are elected, including the water-bailiff, hall-keeper, hayward, ale-tasters, &c. The tything or tutti[1] men visit the residence of the high constable, and are invested with the emblems of office. Their duties consist of calling upon the commoners, and demanding from the men a coin, and from the women a kiss, and presenting every person in the house with an orange. Kissing evidently does not always go by favour, especially at Hungerford during Hock-tide. The collection of pennies is a simple matter, and a large majority of the ladies usually submit to the

[1] So called from their poles, wreathed with tutties or posies of flowers.

ancient usage of the old town; but many hide themselves until all danger of a visit from the tutti men is passed, and bolts and bars often check the advances of the favoured official. A luncheon is given by the high constable at the "Three Swans," during the progress of which the boys and girls of the town scramble for money and oranges thrown to them from the windows. In addition to these remarkable survivals of old customs there is the "Sandin Fee Court," when the list of "Rescients" is read, and regulations made for the feeding of cattle on the marsh. After another dinner the court leet is held, and in the evening the constable's banquet, when his worship sits in a beautiful old carved ebony chair beneath the shade of the famous John o' Gaunt's horn, which is suspended between the two tutti poles. The last toast of the evening is "To the memory of John o' Gaunt," which is drunk in solemn silence as the clock strikes the hour of midnight. The Hock-tide proceedings are brought to a close by the constable, feofers, and other officers attending divine service in the parish church. The municipal customs of Hungerford are a curious and interesting survival, and we hope that they may long retain their peculiar usages.

The duties of the tything or tutti men remind one of the ancient "gatherings"

once universally practised at Hock-tide, and supposed to be held in memory of the victory of our Saxon forefathers over the Danes. The custom was for the men to traverse the streets with ropes, and stop and bind all the women they met, releasing them on payment of a small ransom. On the Tuesday in Hock-tide the women retaliated and bound the men; but this custom is now quite obsolete.[1]

The spirit of mischief inherent in human nature prevents youths and maidens from forgetting the due observance of All Fools' Day (April 1st). Why people should be sent on foolish errands and be made the subjects of harmless jokes on this day, it is difficult to conjecture. Nor is the custom confined to one country. In France the victim is called *un poisson d'Avril* (an April fish), and in Scotland a *gowk* or cuckoo; while in India the same practice prevails. It is supposed to be connected with the popular celebration of the advent of the vernal equinox, though some writers have suggested that *poisson* is a corruption of *Passion*, and that the mock trial of our Saviour is in some way referred to. Probably it is a remnant of the old New Year's Day festivities, which commenced on March 25th and ended on April 1st. To decide

[1] *Cf.* "Old English Sports," by P. H. Ditchfield, p. 42.

the vexed question of the origin of All Fools' Day is almost as vain as to *hunt the gowk*, which, according to the old rhyme, was the fruitless sport assigned to foolish folk :—

> "On the first day of April
> Hunt the gowk another mile." [1]

Still the ingenuity of mankind is taxed on this day to make April fools until the hour of twelve strikes, when the sport is no longer legitimate. It were well if fools and folly could be confined to this brief period of existence.

[1] Dr. Giuseppe Pitri has published a monograph on this subject entitled *Il Pesce d'Aprile* (1891), which may well attract the attention of the curious. The learned author states that "there is scarcely any popular tradition of which the origin is so obscure."

CHAPTER V

May Day customs—Magdalen College, Oxford — Sweeps at Oxford and Cheltenham—Bampton customs—Charlton, Cliflon, and Witney, Oxon—Edlesborough, Bucks—Hawick customs—Saltash, Cornwall—Minehead and Lancashire, Leicestershire, Cornwall, Gloucestershire, Northants customs— Old Maypole still standing—Gawthorpe, Yorks—St. Mary Cray.

FROM ancient times May Day has ever been the great rural festival, when the Maypole was erected on every village green and spring was ushered in with all the merriness of simple rustic revelry. In recent times we have witnessed a revival of the crowning of May Queens and of children dancing around Maypoles. The old ceremonies are closely imitated, but they lack the spontaneity of the ancient rural festivals, and we are concerned now with the actual survivals of old customs, rather than any modern imitations of the same. In many old-world villages and towns we find still the old May Day ceremonies lingering on, and some of these we will visit, and describe how the rustics still continue to "usher in the May."

At Oxford the custom of singing the May

Morning Hymn on the summit of the tower of Magdalen College by the choristers is regularly observed.

This is said to have taken the place of a requiem mass which in pre-Reformation days was performed on the same spot for the repose of the soul of Henry VII. The following are the words of the hymn:—

"Te Deum Patrem colimus,
Te laudibus prosequimur,
Qui corpus cibo reficis
Cœlesti mentem gratia.

Te adoramus, O Jesu!
Te, Fili unigenite!
Tu, qui non dedignatus es
Subire claustra Virginis.

Actus in crucem factus es,
Irato Deo victima;
Per te, Salvator unice,
Vitæ spes nobis rediit.

Tibi, æterne Spiritus,
Cujus afflatu peperit
Infantem Deum Maria,
Æternum benedicimus.

Triune Deus, hominum
Salutis Auctor optime,
Immensum hoc mysterium
Ovanti lingua canimus."

About 150 persons are usually present, and as the hour of five strikes the choir com-

mence to sing the hymn. In the street and on the bridge a large crowd of spectators assemble, many of whom blow horns and other hideous-sounding instruments, and at the conclusion of the hymn they disperse for the accustomed country-walk.

In the same city on May Day garlands are borne along the streets, and a "Jack-in-the-Green," with the accompaniment of about a dozen fantastically dressed men and women, is often seen. This procession is formed by the Sweeps, and consists of the following personages:—

1. Jack-in-the-Green.
2. A "Lord" and "Lady," who are dressed in white and decorated with ribbons. The "Lady" carries a ladle, and the "Lord" a frying-pan.
3. A "Fool," dressed as fantastically as possible, who carries a bladder on a string, wherewith to belabour the bystanders.
4. A fiddler.
5. Two or three men who carry money-boxes.
6. A man with shovel and poker, which he uses as musical instruments.

The whole party, except the "Lady," have their faces blackened, and are decked with

ribbons and flowers. They sing the following song :—

> "Please to remember the chimney-sweeps ;
> Please, kind sir, don't pass us by ;
> We're old sweeps and want a living,
> Spare us a copper as in olden time."

The chimney-sweeps of Cheltenham also hold high revels on May Day. The dancers have their faces blacked, and their band consists of a fiddle and tin-whistle. The centre of the group is formed by a large bush, or hollow cone bedecked with leaves, out of which peers the face of Jack-i'-the-Green. The dresses of the attendants are red, blue, and yellow, and they dance around the bush. The leader of the party is the clown, who wears a tall hat with a flapping crown, and a fantastical dress, and "fancies himself" greatly. There is also a man with a fool's cap, and black figures fastened on his white pinafore, and the representation of a gridiron. Two boys complete the group, one wearing a girl's hat adorned with flowers. They levy contributions by holding out iron ladles or spoons, and strike the bystanders with bladders fastened to a stick. Their performance consists in dancing and roaring. The Cambridge sweeps evidently used to have a similar festival, as the children still go round with a doll, hung in the midst of a hoop wreathed with flowers, singing the ditty—

"The first of May is garland day,
And chimney-sweepers' dancing day;
Curl your locks as I do mine,
One before and one behind."

At Bampton, Oxon, up to within forty or fifty years ago, a party of children used to go round the town on May Day, dressed in white, with red, white, and blue ribbons (these are now the colours of the Club). A boy, called the "Lord," carried a stick dressed with ribbons and flowers, which was called a "sword," and a collecting-box for pence. Two girls, known as the "Lady" and her "Maid," carried on a stick between them the "garland," which was made of two hoops crossed, and covered with moss, flowers, and ribbons. The "Lady" also carried a "mace," a square piece of board mounted on a short staff, on the top of which were sweet-smelling herbs under a muslin cover, decorated with red, white, and blue ribbons and rosettes. The "Lord" and "Lady" were accompanied by a "Jack-in-the-Green." From time to time the "Lady" sang the following words :—

"Ladies and gentlemen,
I wish you a happy May;
Please smell my mace
And kiss my face,
And then we'll show our garland."

After the words "kiss my face," it was the "Lord's" duty to kiss the "Lady," and then to hand round his money-box. This custom has been almost discontinued on May Day for many years past, but is kept up, without the Jack-in-the-Green, at the Club Feast on Whit-Monday.

At Charlton-on-Otmoor, Oxon, on May morning a procession used to start from the vicarage, headed by two men carrying a large garland of flowers on a stick. With them went six morris-dancers, a fool or "Squire," who carried a bladder and a money-box, and a man who played the pipe and tabour. At the end of the day, after the dancing was over, the garland was taken to the church, and hung up on the rood-screen in place of the rood, where it was left till the next May Day, when it was taken down and redressed. The procession and dancing has been given up since 1857, but the garland is still dressed every May Day, and put upon the screen.

At Witney they still have a Jack-in-the-Green, a man enclosed in a bower made in the shape of a pyramid about ten feet high. He is accompanied by various attendants, one bearing a drum or a triangle, and another a large silver ladle for the reception of the monies of the spectators.

At Clifton, near Deddington, Oxon, a number of boys and girls go round with a

garland, carried between two of them on a stick, and sing the following song :—

"Good morning, ladies and gentlemen;
I wish you a happy day;
I'm come to show my garland,
Because it's the First of May.

A bunch of May I have brought you,
And at your door it stands;
It is but a spray, but it's well spread about,
'Tis the work of our God's hands.[1]

And now I've sung my little short song,
No longer can I stay;
God bless you all, both great and small,
And grant you a very happy May."

On May Day, at Spelsbury, the school children go in procession, with a garland carried on a stick between two of them. They choose a "Lord" and a "Lady," who are dressed in white, with coloured ribbons; the rest carry "maces"—*i.e.*, sticks dressed in ribbons and flowers. The following song is sung :—

"Hail! all hail! the merry month of May!
I'm come to show my garland,
Because it's the First of May.

[1] At Warborough, Oxon, they sing this verse :—
"The streets are very dirty,
My shoes are very thin;
But I've got a little pocket
To put my money in."

Hail! all hail! away to the woods away,
And to the fields and lanes so gay.
Hail! all hail!"

At the end of the song, the "Lord" generally kisses the "Lady," and contributions in money are asked of the bystanders.

The children at Wheatley, Oxon, sing a very sweet little May Day song, which is worthy of record :—

"Spring is coming, spring is coming;
Birdies, build your nest;
Weave together straw and feather,
Doing each your best.

Spring is coming, spring is coming,
Flowers are coming too;
Pansies, lilies, daffodilies,
Now are coming through.

Spring is coming, spring is coming,
All around is fair;
Shimmer and quiver on the river,
Joy is everywhere.

We wish you a happy May."

At Edlesborough, Bucks, the girls dress up a doll, sometimes with a small doll in its lap, with many ribbons and flowers, and carry it about in a small chair. This is evidently intended to represent the Virgin and Child. The church is dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin; possibly there may be some connec-

tion between the custom and the patron saint of the parish. A similar custom, almost defunct, prevails at Brightwalton, Berks, where the Virgin and Child, in the guise of the Queen of the May, with a doll in a basket, is borne round the parish.

A rude custom prevails at Minehead on May Day. The men fashion a cardboard ship, about ten feet long, with sails trimmed with flags and ribbons. This is carried on a man's shoulders, his head coming through a hole in the deck of the ship. To the end of the ship is fastened a cow's tail. The men then run about and frighten the people into giving them money, threatening to beat them with the cow's tail. The origin of this custom is said to date from the beginning of the eighteenth century, when a ship was sunk off Dunster, and all hands lost. Only a cow was found, which provided a tail wherewith to grace the ceremony of the "Hobby Ship."

In Hawick a few of the young people still go a-Maying, and rub their faces in the morning dew, whereby they secure twelve months of rosy cheeks; but year by year the number of the devotees of "May Morning" are becoming less, and probably the next generation will know little of the secrets of how rosy cheeks were sought for on early May mornings, and perhaps seek less simple and wholesome ways for producing the much-desired bloom.

Mrs. Pepys knew the virtues of May-dew, as we gather from her husband's diary:—"My wife away to Woolwich in order to a little ayre, and to lie there to-night, and so to gather May-dew to-morrow morning, which Mrs. Turner hath taught her is the only thing in the world to wash her face with."

A very curious May Day custom is observed at Saltash, Cornwall, on the first three days of May. The children gather all the old kettles, scuttles, tea-trays, pails, and other discarded vessels, and link them with cords. In the evenings all these vessels are dragged in noisy trail, with much vocal shouting, in and out of all the nooks and corners of the parish. The sanction of long-established custom secures the tolerance of the town authorities and the public; but the origin of the custom is shrouded in mystery. Probably it is a survival of a heathen rite, intended to scare away demons from the homes and properties of the inhabitants. No alms are asked, and no reason given for the three evenings' noisy proceedings; and there is an air of mystery about the ceremony well according with the theory of a demon-driving rite. Garlands are also carried round the parish by the children on May Morning.

The eve of May Day at Oldham is known as Mischief Night, when it was the custom

for the people to play all manner of tricks on their neighbours. My informant remembers to have seen a thatched house in a village near Oldham adorned with mops, rakes, brushes, on the tops of which were stuck mugs, tubs, pails, or anything portable up to a five-barred gate. Sometimes companies would stay up all night playing and singing in order to welcome the incoming May.

In most of the Lancashire towns the carters decorate their horses with ribbons, rosettes, and flowers. In Bolton prizes are given for the finest team of horses, and the most tastefully adorned, and the same custom prevails in other towns. Lancashire folk dearly love a procession. At the school feasts, the children, dressed in their best finery, always march round the parish. On May Day the gaily-decked horses are paraded through the principal streets, with bands of music, and the Mayor and Corporation usually attend the function, which has many practical uses.

In Cornwall, once the home of the Mayers, the Maypole no longer exists. At High Town, St. Mary's, Scilly, one is erected every year, and the girls dance round it decked with garlands and wreaths. May Day is ushered in at Penzance by the discordant blowing of large tin horns. At daybreak the boys assemble and perambulate the town

blowing their horns and collecting money for a feast.

In Polperro the people go into the country and gather the whitethorn blossoms or narrow-leaved elm. Later on the boys sally forth with buckets and other vessels full of water, and "dip" all who do not wear "the May." They sing as their warrant for their conduct—

"The first of May
Is Dipping Day."

At Padstow the day is called Hobby-Horse Day. A hobby-horse is carried through the streets to Traitor's Pool, where it is made to drink. The head is dipped in the water and the spectators are sprinkled. The procession returns home, singing a song to commemorate the tradition that the French, having landed in the bay, mistook a party of mummers in red cloaks for soldiers, hastily fled to their boats and sailed away.

In Leicestershire the observance of May Day is still kept up, and girls come round bearing a small Maypole tastefully decorated with flowers. The Gloucestershire children sing as follows:—

"Round the Maypole, trit, trit, trot!
See what a garland we have got;
Fine and gay,
Trip away,
Happy is our new May Day."

At Watford, Herts, the girls go about the streets, dressed in white, with gay ribbons and sashes of various colours. They carry a "garland," two hoops, decked with flowers. Their song begins as follows :—

"Here begins the merry month of May,
The bright time of the year,
When Christ our Saviour died for us,
Who loved us so dear.

So dear, so dear, Christ loved us,
And all our sins to save;
We'd better leave off our wickedness
And turn to the Lord again.

My song is done, I must be gone,
No longer can I stay;
God bless you all, both great and small,
I wish you a merry month of May."

Girls with garlands are seen at Great Gransden, Huntingdonshire, but the old *May Lord* and *May Lady* who once flourished here are now dead.

At Duxford, Cambridgeshire, the children bring their garlands and dolls, and sing :—

"First and second and third of May
Are chimney-sweepers' dancing days;
Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you a happy May,
I've come to show my garlands
Because it is May Day."

A perfect garland of song adorns this

bright rural festival, and a volume of the verses sung on May Day might be written. We will conclude our May Day songs with the words of Mayers in Northamptonshire, at Denton and Chaldecote :—

" Here come up poor players all, and thus do we begin
To lead our lives of righteousness, for fear we die in sin.
To die in sin is dreadful, to go where sinners mourn,
'Twould have been better for our souls if we had ne'er been born.
Good morning, lords and ladies! it is the First of May;
I hope you'll view the garland, for it looks so very gay.
The cuckoo sings in April, the cuckoo sings in May,
The cuckoo sings in June, in July it flies away.
Now take a Bible in your hand and read a chapter through,
And when the day of judgment comes, the Lord will think of you."

The hand of the Puritans is evident in this curious medley, who altered the old May songs and took away from them much of their light-heartedness. But, as we have already seen, many of the old merry verses survived, and are still repeated in the old villages of England.

The original Maypole still stands in many villages. At Orwell, near Cambridge, it stood till, in 1869, it was destroyed by a storm, and has not since been replaced. There is a fine one at Wellow, near Ollerton, Northamp-

tonshire; at Redmire, near Bolton Castle, Yorkshire; at Hemswell, near Gainsborough, Lincolnshire; at Welford, Gloucestershire; at Donnington, Shropshire; and at Preston Brockhurst, in the same county. The Maypole may still be seen at Gawthorpe, Yorkshire, where the ancient customs are kept up, although marred by the invasion of factories and the absence of all the sylvan beauties of the country. Long streets of hideous cottages and mill chimneys belching forth their clouds of smoke are not in keeping with the celebration of the Arcadia of the First of May. But still the May Queen rides on horseback surrounded by her sponsors, electors, and attendants, and the Maypole is reared and danced around as in the good old days.

At Polebrooke, Oundle, the children elect a May Queen and parade the village, the May Queen at the head of the procession, attended by two girls carrying dressed dolls placed in a bower of green and flowers. They sing the following words:—

"May is come, we spy the traces
Of her fingers in the flowers,
Boys and girls with smiling faces
Come and seek her through the bowers.
Catch young May,
Make her stay,
Dance around her bright and gay."

One of the most successful revivals of the May Day festivities takes place at St. Mary Cray, Kent. There the old festival rites are celebrated amid beautiful surroundings, and thousands assemble to watch Maypole dances and attend the coronation of the fair May Queen. There have been so many revivals of the old May Day customs, that it is not vain to hope that ere long each village may again have its Maypole and its May Queen, and the hearts of the rustic youths and maidens be rejoiced by the quaint observances of this old-time festival.

CHAPTER VI

Helston Furry dance—Rogation-tide and Ganging Week—Beating the bounds at Malborough, Lichfield, Oxford, Leicester, and London—Royal Oak Day—Wilts custom—Selkirk Common-Riding—"Grovely"—Singing custom at Durham.

ON May 8th, at Helston, Cornwall, there remains a most curious and interesting survival of an ancient Celtic custom, which is known as the Furry Dance. From time immemorial this festival has been held, and there seems no sign of decaying vitality. The origin of the festival is disputed. Some attribute it to the vision of a fiery dragon over Helston in remote ages, when the inhabitants naturally were grievously alarmed; and the Furry dance was subsequently instituted, with the accompaniment of flowers and branches, as a token of rejoicing for the disappearance of the monster. Others say it is a festival in honour of the Roman goddess Flora; whilst still others claim that it is connected with the Feast of St. Michael, in memory of the cessation of a great plague which raged in the seventh century,—St. Michael being the patron saint of Helston.

A legend narrates that he once encountered the Devil, who was playing with a block of granite known as Hell's Stone, having been originally placed at the mouth of the infernal regions. The Devil was worsted in the combat, and took to flight, dropping the stone into the yard of the Angel Inn, where it remained until the end of the last century as a witness of the truth of the story. This stone naturally gave the name to the town.

On May 8th, a procession of thirty or forty couples is formed at the Market-house, and, preceded by a band, goes through the town dancing a quaint country-dance to the Celtic Furry tune. The parties are composed of gentlemen and ladies of the county families in the neighbourhood, and the peculiarity of the ceremony is that they dance in and out of all the houses, going in at the front door and out at the back, and returning *vice versâ*. It is a strange processional dance, in no way resembling the old Maypole circular dance of the Merrie England of our forefathers. The words of the old Furry song, set to a quaint and original melody, are curious, and run as follows:—

"Robin Hood and Little John,
They both are gone to the fair, O;
And we to the merry greenwood,
To see what they do there, O.

And for to chase, O,
To chase the buck and doe,
With Hal-an-tow,
Jolly rumble, O.

(*Chorus*)—
And we were up as soon as any day, O,
And for to fetch the summer home,
The summer and the May, O;
For the summer is a come, O,
And winter is a go, O.

Where are those Spaniards
That made so great a boast, O?
They shall eat the grey goose feather,
And we will eat the roast, O.
And every land, O,
The land that ere we go,
With Hal-an-tow,
Jolly rumble, O.

(*Chorus as before.*)

As for St. George, O,
St. George he was a knight, O;
Of all the kings in Christendom,
King George is the right, O.
In every land, O,
The land that ere we go,
With Hal-an-tow,
Jolly rumble, O.

(*Chorus*)—
God bless Aunt Mary Moses,
With all her power and might, O;
And send us peace in Merry England
Both day and night, O."

The figure of the dance is simple. To the first half of the tune the couples dance hand in hand; at the second the first gentleman turns the second lady, and the second gentleman the first lady. This change is made all down the set.

Whether the word Furry is derived from Flora or from *fer*, a fair or merrymaking, or from the Greek φερω, "to bear," or from the Cornish *furrier*, a thief, alluding to the spoils of the greenwood brought home to deck their festival, I must leave to the ingenuity of the curious. The modern festival is utilised by the inhabitants of Helston as an occasion for holding horse, dog, and poultry shows, and also a Home Mission bazaar; but it still remains one of the most curious and interesting gatherings in the kingdom.

Formerly any one found at work on this day was seized, set astride on a pole, jolted away on men's shoulders amidst a thousand huzzas, and at last sentenced to leap over a part of the river, so wide that the task was impossible without the performer being immersed. He could, however, gain his liberty by a small contribution towards the entertainments of the day. The boys of the Grammar School were not forgotten, and a holiday was demanded for them by the revellers. The children used to "fade" (a Cornish word

signifying "to go") into the country, and return with their heads decorated with flowers and oak-leaves. Latterly all the ancient customs connected with the day have not been strictly observed, but the old Furry dance is still kept up with accustomed vigour.

The week in which Rogation-tide and Ascension Day fall is sometimes known as Gang Week, so named from the custom of ganging or beating the bounds of the parishes. This custom was once universally practised. In the "Book of Homilies" there is a special "Exhortation to be spoken to such parishes when they use their perambulation in Rogation Week, for the oversight of the bounds and limits of their town." The words of the homily are worth quoting, and state that "we have occasion given us in our walks today to consider the old ancient bounds and limits belonging to our township, and to other our neighbours bordering about us, to the intent that we should be content with our own, and not contentiously strive for others', to the breach of charity, by any encroaching one upon another, or claiming one of the other, further than that in ancient right and custom our forefathers have peacefully laid out unto us for our commodity and comfort." Lawyers' deeds and the Ordnance Survey maps have rendered it well-nigh impossible to be guilty of the encroaching

of which the homily speaks, but in several places the custom of beating the bounds is still kept up.

At Malborough, Devonshire, the practice is observed with all due formality; the mayor and town-councillors invariably perambulate the town and traverse its boundaries. A few years ago the mayor himself was thoroughly ducked during his progress, in order to ensure his remembering a certain bit of the river boundary. In many places boys were beaten or ducked at certain spots, in order to impress their memories with the details of the parish bounds; but it is not often that so important and dignified an official as a mayor receives such a painful aid to memory.

In beating the bounds of the city of Oxford it is necessary for the mayor and corporation to take a boat and go on the river. A few years ago we read that "the mayor and others were upset," and later on the boat capsized. Perhaps this ducking was in lieu of "bumping," and shows that even the holding of the office of mayor has some drawbacks.

Every three years the bounds of the parish of St. Mary's, Leicester, are beaten, and the day is observed as a holiday by the children. The procession is composed of the vicar, churchwardens, and other officials, and about two hundred and fifty boys. Formerly at one spot in the route a hole was dug, and

any newly-appointed parish officer was seized, and his head placed in the hole, while his body was thumped with a shovel. A feast was held, and various sports followed, such as racing, bobbing for apples in buckets of water, &c.; but these have been discontinued.

At Lichfield on Ascension Day the choristers of the cathedral deck the houses and street lamps in the parish of the Close with elm-boughs. After the midday service the clergy and choir start in procession from the cathedral, properly vested, the boys carrying small pieces of elm, and go round the boundaries of the parish, making a halt at eight stations where wells exist, or are said to have existed. At each of these stations the Gospel for the day is said by one of the priest-vicars in turn, followed by the singing of one verse of Psalm civ. or c. On re-entering the cathedral by the north-west door, the verse, "O enter then His gates with praise" is sung, and the company gather round the font, where the blessing is given, and the boys throw down their boughs. On the same day the sacrist gives a bun to every unconfirmed child in the parish.

At Oxford the bounds of the parish of St. Mary the Virgin were beaten by boys with white willow wands when Dean Burgon was the vicar, and the writer remembers to have seen them entering the quadrangle of Oriel

College during their perambulations. I am not aware whether the practice is still continued.

In a parish in Suffolk the vicar revived the custom a few years ago, but the farmers objected to the people crossing their fields and making gaps in their hedges.

Just over the Border they have a famous beating of the bounds, better known as the Selkirk Common-Riding. On the eve of the celebration the senior burgh officer, attended by a fifer and a drummer, marches through the town and announces to the lieges that on the morrow the important and historic ceremonies would be observed. At four o'clock on the following day the caller morning air is pierced by the music of the fife and drum, and soon a band of pipers parade the streets, and enthusiastic "Souters" of all ages assemble to take part in the proceedings. The flag of the town, an old and battered pennon, has recently been replaced by a new one, which is carried in the Common-Riding. The object of this festival is to ride the marches of the town's lands in order to protect them from the encroachments or thieving propensities of neighbouring lairds. A procession is then formed consisting of mounted constables, the brass band, the Bailies and members of the Town-Council, the Hammermen with their flag,

the Merchant Company, Standard-Bearer, Provost, Town-Clerk, Burleymen, and others, all mounted, to the number of about a hundred. The Common-Riding Choir sing appropriate melodies. Then the riders proceed on their gallop round the marches, and not unusually several "spills" occur amongst the inexperienced equestrians. Refreshments are served at different places during the journey, and the lease of one farm obliges the tenant to regale the horsemen at the Common-Riding. Races are run for switches amidst wild excitement, and then the company return to the town, where a picturesque ceremony takes place commemorating the noble achievements of the famous Selkirk Souters at Flodden Field. The Hammermen and the Souters cast the colours to the tune of "Up wi' the Souters o' Selkirk," and the ceremony is concluded with tumultuous cheers. The Selkirk Common-Riding is the great festival of the year in the town, and does much to foster local *esprit de corps*, and to preserve the historical and legendary lore of this beautiful Border district.

In London in several parishes, and at Torquay, beating the bounds is observed with municipal honours; and possibly in many other places the custom still exists, but no further particulars have been ascertained of the practice of this ancient observance.

May 29th, the birthday of Charles II., and the day of his public entry into London after the Restoration, is duly honoured by young people in many parts of the country. In Wilts it is known as Shitsack or Shick-shack Day,[1] when the children carry shitsack, or sprigs of young oak, in the morning, and powder-monkey or even-ash (ash leaves with an equal number of leaflets) in the afternoon. Those who wear these emblems of loyalty have the privilege of pinching or otherwise ill-treating those who do not don the oak-leaf. The adoption of this leaf is, of course, intended to commemorate the escape of the King when he hid himself in the famous oak at Boscobel after the battle of Worcester.

At Edlesborough, Buckinghamshire, it has always been the custom to attach an oak-bough to the flag-staff on the church-tower on "Oak Apple Day," and we remember to have seen a similar practice in Cheshire.

The day is called "Oak and Nettle Day" in Nottinghamshire, where the boys arm themselves with oaken sprigs and bunches of nettles. All who cannot "show their oak," and thus testify to their loyalty, are punished by being struck with the nettles on their hands and face. Rotten eggs used to be instruments of punishment about twenty years ago.

[1] Also in Berks.

Royal Oak Day

Royal Oak Day is loyally observed at Northampton, which has a grateful remembrance of several generous acts of the Stuart king. A great fire nearly destroyed the town in 1675, and Charles II. gave the citizens a thousand tons of timber out of Whittlewood Forest to enable them to rebuild their houses, and also remitted the duty of chimney-money for seven years. Hence his memory is duly honoured. The corporation attend All Saints' Church on May 29th, and march thither in procession, followed by all the school-children in the town, the boys having gilt oak-apples in their caps. The statue of the king, near the church, is also decorated with oaken boughs on this day, and many of the houses are similarly adorned. Northampton is evidently very loyal, and does not forget kindness.

A very strange custom prevails on this day at Wishford and Barford, near Salisbury. The inhabitants of these villages have certain rights in Grovely woods. These rights are kept up by a meeting on "Oak Apple Day," when boughs are gathered and carried in procession, and the cry is "Grovely! Grovely! Grovely!"

It is still the custom for the Durham Cathedral choir to ascend the tower of the cathedral on May 29, and sing three anthems from the three sides of it. This custom is

as old as the battle of Neville's Cross, which Queen Philippa fought with David I. of Scotland in the year 1346, when the monks chanted masses from the summit of the tower on behalf of the Queen. Tradition states that a choir boy once overbalanced himself and fell from the tower, and was killed. Hence the choir only sing their anthems on the three sides.

CHAPTER VII

Club feasts at Whitsuntide—Bampton, Oxon—Morris-dancers—Irish "death ride"—Wakes in Lancashire and Yorks—Rush-bearing at Oldham, Ambleside, Grasmere—Hay strewing at Braunston, Leicester—Horn dance at Abbot Bromley—"Flower sermon"—Cornish "feasten" Sunday.

WHITSUNTIDE is the great season for the old club feasts. From an economic point of view, no one who has the welfare of the people at heart will regret the decline of the old village benefit clubs. They were nearly all rotten; they were conducted on the most unsound systems of financial organisation; they usually failed to benefit the members when aid was most needed; and their place is well supplied by the admirably conducted benefit societies, the Oddfellows, Foresters, and other sound benefit clubs. But the student of the manners and customs of our race regrets the disappearance of many of our village clubs, because it has entailed the destruction of many old customs associated with the annual club feast, which were not without their special interest and

importance. Those that have survived the lapse of time are here recorded.

At Bampton, Oxon, in order to celebrate the club feast, which is held on Whit-Monday, a procession goes round the town; it is made up as follows:—

1. A drum-and-piper, or, as he is more commonly called, "whittle-and-dub" man (the term pipe-and-tabour was in use within living memory); the music is now, however, played by a fiddler.

2. Eight morris-dancers, dressed in finely-pleated white shirts, white moleskin trousers, and top-hats decorated with red, white, and blue ribbons. Only six dance at a time, two standing out to relieve the others. They dance to certain well-known tunes (a list of which is given), and sing while they dance.

3. A clown called the "Squire," who carries a staff with a calf's tail at one end and a bladder at the other, with which he belabours the bystanders. He also carries a money-box, known as the "treasury," which in this case is a wood box with a slit in the lid.

4. A "sword-bearer," who carries a cake in a round tin impaled on a sword. The cake is a rich pound-cake, and is provided by some lady in the town. The tin has its rim cut into zig-zags, and has a slit in the bottom to admit the sword-blade. Both cake and sword are decorated with ribbons.

When the dancing begins, any one who wishes can taste the cake by applying to the "sword-bearer." When all is over at night, what is left of the cake is divided amongst the eleven men, who generally give it to their friends.

BAMPTON MORRIS-DANCERS.

First Dance, to the tune of "Green Garters."

"First for the stockings, and then for the shoes,
And then for the bonny green garters;
A pair for me, and a pair for you,
And a pair for they that comes after."

Second Dance, to the tune of "Constant Billy."

"Oh, my Billy, my constant Billy,
When shall I see my Billy again?
When the fishes fly over the mountain,
Then you'll see your Billy again."

Third Dance, to the tune of "The Willow Tree."

"Once they said my lips were red,
Now they're scarlet pale;
When I, like a silly girl,
Believ'd his flattering tale.
But he vow'd he'd never deceive me,
And so fondly I believ'd he,
While the stars and the moon
So sweetly shone
Over the willow-tree."

Fourth Dance, to the tune of "The Maid of the Mill."

"There's fifty fair maidens that sport on the green,
I gaz'd on them well, as you see;
But the Maid of the Mill, the Maid of the Mill,
The Maid of the Mill for me.
She is straight and tall as a poplar-tree,
Her cheeks are red as a rose;
She is one of the fairest young girls I see,
When she's dress'd in her Sunday clothes.
The Maid of the Mill, the Maid of the Mill,
The Maid of the Mill for me."

Handsome John.

"John is a handsome youth complete,
A smarter young lad never walked the street;
And still the lady's tongue runs on—
Oh! what a handsome man was John!
Sing fal the ral a li do."

Highland Mary.

"Around sweet Highland Mary's grave
We'll plant the fairest of lilies—
The primrose sweet and violet blue,
Likewise the daffodillies.
But since this world's been grown so wide,
In some lonesome place we'll tarry;
Welcome then come (*sic*), gather me to sleep
With my Highland Mary."

Bob and Joan.

"I won't be my father's Jack,
And I won't be my mother's Jill;
But I will be some fiddler's wife,
Then we can muse it at our will.
T'other little tune—t'other little tune,
Bob at night and Bob at noon."

The melodies to which these words are sung are quaint and original. They have been noted down as sung by the villagers at the present time, and are published in the Appendix. Some of the customs of old May Day are observed now at Whitsuntide at Bampton.[1] Other dancing tunes are "Old Tom of Oxford," "The Old Green Bushes," "The Girl I Left Behind Me," "The Nutting Girl," "The Old Green Sleeves," "Jogging to the Fair," "The Princess Royal," "The Forester's Daughter," "The Bride in Camp," and "The Flowers of Emborough."

It is pleasing to find that at least in one village the old country-dances still exist. In most parts of England they have become extinct. Waltz and polka have banished the old traditional steps and figures, songs and melodies which were once favoured at the Court of the Stuarts, and were carried abroad to France, Germany, and Italy, and

[1] *Cf.* "May Day Customs," p. 100.

became everywhere popular. They were called country-dances, or *contre-danses*, because the performers were formed in two lines, the ladies on one side, the gentlemen on the other. Whilst they danced the familiar steps, "crossed hands and down the middle," all the dancers sang the words of the old ballad "Bob and Joan" or "Highland Mary." Such were the old English country-dances, which the Bampton villagers have preserved until the present day. We have witnessed notable revivals of May Queens and Maypole dances. May we hope that some one will revive for us the old-fashioned English country-dances?

In the Kennet Valley, near Newbury, Whitsuntide is the great village holiday when the surviving clubs assemble. Decked out in their best clothes adorned with ribbons and banners, the men parade the lanes, preceded by a band, and march to the church, where a special service is held. Then they adjourn to a barn and have dinner, and later in the day go to one or two of the principal houses in the neighbourhood, where dancing takes place on the lawn or drives, while the band plays vigorously. Village sports, running, and racing are not uncommon at these club feasts, and at Brindle, near Preston, Lancashire, we have seen a most graceful company of

morris-dancers, consisting of about sixteen young men, dressed in tight-fitting purple knickerbockers and stockings, with football "sweaters" of the same colour. They had staves in their hands, and danced up the village street, striking their staves together in rhythmic time, while a band played stirring melodies. It was a graceful and pleasing spectacle, and may still be seen in the neighbourhood of Preston and Chorley.

Very different from these homely scenes are the wild spectacles which Irish superstition brings before the eyes of the credulous, and none are so weird as "the death-ride" which occurs at Whitsuntide. The Irish peasants believe that on a particular day at this season of the year all those who have been drowned in the sea come up and ride over the waves on white horses and hold strange revels. A fisherman who remained on the water on the night of this ghastly pageant saw a crowd of the dead on white horses making their way towards him. Their faces were pale with the hue of death and their eyes burned with fire. They stretched out thin long arms to lay hold on him, but he managed to escape from their fearful grasp. As he landed, however, one of the horsemen rode close to him, and he saw the face of a friend who had been drowned the year before, and heard a voice calling him to

escape. Accordingly, he fled at full speed, never even daring to look back to see whether he was pursued.

The Wakes festivals are also great occasions for the morris-dancers, especially at Oldham, Lancashire, and in that neighbourhood. This is one of the oldest of our feasts, and has survived with a surprising tenacity of life in most of the villages and towns of Lancashire. The day of the wakes is the festival of the patron saint of the parish church, and is so called because, on the previous night or vigil, the people used to watch, or "wake," in the church till the morning dawned. It is the custom for the inhabitants of the parish to keep open house on that day, and to entertain all their relations and friends from the surrounding neighbourhood, who always make a point of visiting the village on "Wake Sunday." It is a great time for the assembling of shows and roundabouts, which, with their steam-organs, make night hideous. Nearly every town and village in Lancashire observes its wakes. Rochdale, Heywood, Ashton-under-Lyne, and Oldham are especially celebrated for their observance of this festival; though the people are now in the habit of rushing off to the seaside, and desert the local fair grounds for the attractions of Morecambe and Blackpool. The

feasts or wakes in the neighbourhood of Bradford are called "Tides," except at Brighouse, where the festival is still known as the Rush-bearing, and are kept up vigorously. The Sunday after the feast is known as the "Thump."[1] Thus we have the Queensbury Thump, the Clayton, Thornton, Denholme, and Allerton Thumps, when the natives who reside elsewhere make a rule to visit their old home, and the reassembling of scattered families causes much social happiness. At Great Gransden the feast is held on the Monday after the Feast of St. Bartholomew, the patron saint of the village, when stalls are erected near the Plough Inn, and the villagers indulge in dancing. At West Houghton, Lancashire, a huge pie is made in the shape of a cow's head, which is eaten on the day of the wake, the Sunday after St. Bartholomew's Day. The inhabitants are sometimes called "cow 'yeds." At the Oldham wake a rushcart used to be sent from each surrounding locality, and as many as ten rushcarts have been seen in the town on that occasion. They are not now quite so plentiful.

[1] A writer in the *Oldham Observer* suggests that the name arose from the rude custom of "thumping" any one who entered an inn on these occasions and refused to pay for liquor. At a recent Halifax "Thump," an offender of this description was laid face downwards and beaten with a heated fire shovel. The ringleader of this frolic nearly suffered a month's imprisonment on account of his strict adherence to old customs.

The origin of the rush-bearing dates back to the early times when the floors of our houses and churches consisted of the hard dry earth, which was covered with rushes; and once a year there was the great ceremony of the rush-bearing, when the inhabitants of each village or town went in procession to the church to strew the floor with newly-cut rushes. Although we no longer need the rushes to cover the nakedness of our church aisles, the ceremony of rush-bearing still exists. The rush-cart is piled up with rush-sheaves decorated with ribbons, and the morris-dancers perform their quaint antics. Sometimes there is a May Queen under a canopy of rushes, and a jester with a bladder attached to a staff, with which he belabours the crowd as he marches in front of the procession.

Some particulars of the annual rush-bearing at Ambleside may not be without interest. It is held on the last Saturday in July, the next Saturday after St. Anne's Day, who was the patron saint of Ambleside.[1] The children meet at the church-room, and with the rush-bearers, carrying about two hundred crosses made of rushes and decorated with flowers, form a procession, attended by the clergy. They march to the church, where a special service takes place, and a ser-

[1] The modern church is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin.

mon is preached appropriate to the occasion. After the service each child receives a square of gingerbread, according to ancient custom. On Sunday the festival is continued.

The rushes, no longer needed as a carpet, are formed into various devices to symbolise Christian truths, and in recent years have been ornamented with flowers. Rush-bearing is a beautiful old custom, and creates much interest in the old-world places wherein it continues to thrive. The floor of the church of St. Peter, Barrowden, is strewed with reeds cut from the river-side for six weeks after the festival of St. Peter.

The rush-bearing at Grasmere is a beautiful and picturesque festival, and claims to be the only place where the custom appears to have an unbroken record from remote ages to the present day. It owes its preservation to the energy of the late vicar, Mr. Fletcher, and the liberality of the late Mr. Dawson of Allan Bank, Grasmere, who was an admirer of the old custom, and encouraged the children to keep up the procession by presenting a reward to each of the youthful rush-bearers. Until 1885 the rush-bearing took place on the Saturday nearest July 20th; it is now celebrated on the Saturday nearest to St. Oswald's Day (August 5th), to whom the church is dedicated. The churchwardens' account-books reveal the

numerous charges for "ale bestowed on ye rush-bearers and others, 2s.," also "cakes for the rush-bearers," &c. As late as 1841 the floor of the church was unpaved, and was yearly strewed with rushes at the popular festival. Hone gives a very interesting record of rush-bearing at Grasmere, as it was celebrated in the earlier years of the century (July 21, 1827):—

"The church door was open, and I discovered that the villagers were strewing the floor with fresh rushes. During the whole of this day, I observed the children busily employed in preparing garlands of such wild flowers as the beautiful valley produces for the evening procession, which commenced at 9 P.M., in the following order:—The children, chiefly girls, holding these garlands, paraded through the village preceded by the Union Band (thanks to the great drum for this information). They then entered the church, when the three largest garlands were placed on the altar, and the remaining ones in various other parts of the place. In the procession I observed the Opium-Eater, Mr. Barber (an opulent gentleman residing in the neighbourhood), Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth, Miss Wordsworth, and Miss Dora Wordsworth. Wordsworth is the chief supporter of these rustic ceremonies. The procession over, the party adjourned to the ball-room,

a hayloft, at my worthy friend Mr. Bell's, where the country lads and lasses tripped it merrily and heavily. The dance was kept up till a quarter to twelve, when a livery servant entered and delivered the following verbal message to Billy (the fiddler): 'Master's respects, and will thank you to lend him the fiddle-stick.' Billy took the hint: the Sabbath was now at hand, and the pastor of the parish had adopted this gentle mode of apprising the assembled revellers that they ought to cease their revelry. The servant departed with the fiddle-stick, the chandelier was removed, and when the village clock struck twelve, not an individual was to be seen out of doors in the village."

Pews and floors were introduced into the church in 1841, but the rush-bearing continued to be kept up with undiminished vigour. It is now celebrated on the Saturday next after St. Oswald's Day (August 5th), and new developments have taken place, which are revivals of the old-time mode of rush-bearing. The children assemble with their garlands, and arrange them along the churchyard wall, where thousands come to admire the devices and floral decorations. Moses in the bulrushes used to be a favourite design which rush-bearers attempted to represent. At 6.30 the procession is

marshalled in the road in the following order :—

Banner of St. Oswald.
Clergy and Choir in surplices.
Band.
Queen with Pages.
Maids of Honour bearing the Rush-sheet.
The Rush-bearers.

The queen and her court and the bearing of the rush-sheet were revived in 1891. The latter was always an important feature in the old festival. "Arranging the sheet," says Bamford, a Lancashire poet, "was exclusively the work of girls and women; and in proportion as it was happily designed and fitly put together, was the praise or disparagement meted out by the people—a point on which they would be not a little sensitive. The sheet was a piece of white linen, generally a good bed-sheet, and on it were pretty rosettes and quaint compartments, and borderings of all colours and hues which either paper, tinsel, ribbons, or natural flowers could supply. In these compartments were arranged silver watches, trays, spoons, sugar-tongs, teapots, quart tankards, drinking cups, and other fitting articles of ornament and value." The present sheet was spun in Grasmere by a young woman of the village.

After the procession has been formed, the

hymn for St. Oswald is sung, and the band plays the "Rush-bearing March" (said to have been played nearly a century ago), and the procession perambulates the village, the bells ringing and the tower flag flying. On returning to the church, the Rush-bearers' Hymn is sung, and the garlands arranged round the walls. Full choral Evensong follows. The children afterwards receive gingerbread, and some wrestling bouts engage the attention of the young men. The garlands are removed on the following Monday to a neighbouring field, where the Maypole is set up, and a regular gala held for the rush-bearers and all who choose to share it. The words of the Rush-bearers' Hymn and that of St. Oswald have no great distinguishing merit, and two verses of the former may suffice :—

The Rush-bearers' Hymn.

Our fathers to the House of God,
As yet a building rude,
Bore offerings from the flowery sod,
And fragrant rushes strewed.

May we, their children, ne'er forget
The pious lesson given,
But honour still, together met,
The Lord of Earth and Heaven.

The rush-bearing with morris-dancing is

still kept up at Whitworth, near Rochdale; at Warcop, Westmorland; Haworth and Saddleworth, Yorks; and other places.

Sometimes churches are now strewn with hay, as is the case at Braunston, Leicestershire, on the day of the feast, the Sunday after St. Peter's Day. On the Thursday before the wake or feast, the Holme Meadow is mown, and the parish clerk fetches on the Saturday a small load of hay, which he must spread with his hands on the floor of the church. The portion of the meadow whence the hay is brought is called "The Clerk's Acre," and the rest of the hay belongs to him. At many other churches in Leicestershire the same custom used to exist, but we believe this is the only surviving one.

It will be remarked that the wakes were originally a religious festival held in honour of the patron saint of the village. It was the occasion for the assembling of many people from the neighbouring towns and villages. Hence the chapmen and tradesfolk came to exhibit and sell their wares, and the festival of the saint became the fair of the place; the word itself being derived from the ecclesiastical term *feria*, a holiday. The religious element of the old wakes has passed away, but the festival is still observed as a great social and friendly

gathering; and as it continues to promote kindly and neighbourly feelings, it is not without its uses.

The annual wakes at Abbot Bromley, a village on the borders of Needwood Forest, near Stafford, is celebrated by a curious survival from mediæval times called the Horn-dance. Six deer-skulls with antlers, mounted on short poles, are carried about by men grotesquely attired, who caper to a lively tune, and make "the deer," as the antlers are called, dance about. Another quaintly dressed individual, mounted on a hobby-horse, is at hand with a whip, with which he lashes the deer every now and again in order to keep them moving. Meanwhile a sportsman with a bow and arrow makes believe to shoot the deer. The horn-dance used to take place on certain Sunday mornings at the main entrance to the parish church, when a collection was made for the poor. At the present day the horns are the property of the vicar for the time being, and are kept, with a bow and arrow and the frame of the hobby-horse, in the church-tower, together with a curious old pot for collecting money at the dance. It takes place now on the Monday after Wakes Sunday, which is the Sunday next to September 4th. Similar dances formerly took place in other places in the county of Stafford,

notably at the county town and Seighford, where they lingered until the beginning of the century. The under-jaw of the hobby-horse is loose, and is worked by a string, so that it "clacks" against the upper-jaw in time with the music. The money is collected by a woman, probably Maid Marion; the archer is doubtless a representation of Robin Hood; and besides these characters there is a jester. Dr. Cox has examined the horns, and pronounced them to be reindeer horns.

The city of London even is not deprived at this bright season of all associations with the beauties of the country. At St. James'-Church, Mitre Court, Aldgate, on Whitsun Tuesday, the "Flower Sermon" is preached, and at St. Leonard's Church, Shoreditch, a botanical sermon is delivered, according to the will of Thomas Fairchild in 1729.

In Cornwall the festival of the dedication of each church is kept on the nearest Sunday and Monday to the saint's day, which are called by the people "Feasten" Sunday and Monday. "Plum-cake," coloured bright yellow with saffron, is the favourite viand on these occasions.

CHAPTER VIII

Midsummer Eve customs, Pontypridd, Wales—Cornish customs—Bale-fires—Ratby meadow-mowing—Reeve houses at Desford—Harvest customs—Mell-sheaf and Kern-supper—Kern-baby—The "maiden"—Cailleach—Devonshire "Knack"—"Dumping"—Harvest-bell—Horn-blowing in Hertfordshire—Harvest-songs—Sheep-shearing in Dorset—Michaelmas goose—Biddenham rabbit—St. Crispin's Day and the shoemakers.

THERE is a strange mixture of elements in the constitution of our social customs and observances. Some of them are distinctly ecclesiastical and of Christian origin, though, as we have seen, in many cases the religious element has been eliminated. In others the origin is distinctly Pagan, and carries us back to the time when Norse legendary lore or Saxon superstition filled the hearts of our forefathers.

The observance of the wakes was originally of a religious character. We now record one of a distinctively Celtic nature. Midsummer Eve is one of the ancient Druidic festivals still liberally honoured in Wales. The

custom of lighting bonfires survives in many villages, and around them the villagers dance and leap through the flames. At Pontypridd there are various ceremonies of a solemn sort. The leaping through the flames is supposed to ward off evil spirits and prevent sickness. The connection of the ceremony of the bonfires with the old worship of the sun is indisputable. Its practice was very general in nearly all European nations, and in not very remote times, from Norway to the shores of the Mediterranean, the glow of St. John's fires might have been seen. The Scandinavians lit their bonfires in honour of their gods Odin and Thor, and the leaping through the flames reminds us of the worshippers of Baal and Moloch, who used to pass their children through the fire that burned at the feet of their cruel god. It is strange that such a custom should have had so long a continuance.

The customs of Wales and Cornwall are naturally very similar, and on the Cornish hills the bonfires blaze, though they are not so numerous as formerly. In remote and primitive districts the people still believe that dancing in a ring around a bonfire or leaping through its flames is calculated to ensure good luck to the performers, and to serve as a protection from witchcraft and other malign influences during the ensuing

year. Some years ago on Midsummer's Eve the old people would hobble away to some high ground whence they could obtain a view of the most prominent hills, such as Carnbrea, Castle-an-Dinas, Carn Galver, St. Agnes Bickaw, and many other beacon-hills far away to the north and east, which vied with each other in their midsummer's blaze. They counted the fires, and drew a presage from the number of them. There are now but few bonfires to be seen on the western heights; but Tregonan, Godolphin, and Carn Martle Hills, with others towards Redruth, still retain their Baal fires. Groups of girls, neatly dressed and decked with garlands, wreaths, or chaplets of flowers, until quite recently used to dance in the streets on Midsummer's Eve; but this custom has almost died out.

But when we cross the sea and visit the extreme west of Brittany, we see the Baal-fires blaze on every hill, round which the peasants dance all night, in their holiday clothes, to the sound of the *biniou* (a kind of rustic hautboy) and the shepherd's horn. The girl who dances round nine St. John's fires before midnight is sure to be married within the year. In many parishes the curé himself goes in procession with banner and cross to light the sacred fire, and all the superstitions which ever flourished in the Celtic

portion of our island are venerated and observed with unabated faith and zeal. In Ireland too the Bale or Beltane fires are lighted, and young men leap through the flames, while the children are lifted across the embers when the fire has burnt low, in order to secure them good luck during the coming year. This usually takes place on May Day in Ireland. Lady Wilde gives an account of the origin of these fires which was furnished by an old peasant. The "bushes" lighted on May Day were first set up in honour of the conquest of the Tuatha de Danans by the great Milesians. A magician of the Tuatha caused innumerable fiery darts to go forth against the Milesian prince; but in passing they were all stopped by a bush that stood between the chief and the magician, so that a flame arose and the bush withered and burned away. Hence the burning of the May bushes, which to this day are supposed to preserve those who pass through the smoke against witchcraft. The authority of this folk legend is, of course, indisputable.

"To the immortal memory of John of Gaunt" is, as we have already noticed, a toast drunk at the Hocktide solemnities at Hungerford. There is another town where the same toast is annually proposed and drunk in solemn silence. At Ratby, in the county of Leicester, an annual feast takes

place which is remarkable for several quaint observances, and owes its origin to the time of the worthy son of King Edward III. It appears that the lot meadows at Ratby adjoined the road, and the custom from very early times was for the occupiers to mow their crops on a certain day, called "Meadow-morning," and to spend the rest of the day with music and dancing. Now it happened that John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, passed along the road, and observing their mirth and festivity, he alighted from his horse and asked the cause of their diversion. They told him that they were mowing their meadow, called Ramsdale, according to their annual custom. The Duke, still preserving his *incognito*, joined in their diversions, and was so pleased with their innocent pastimes, that when he took his leave he told them that if they would meet him in Leicester, he would give to each of them a ewe to their ram, also a wether whose fleece would make them a rich repast. Accordingly the rustics went to Leicester, and the Duke redeemed his promise by giving them three pieces of land to be called respectively, "the Ewes," "the Boots," and "the Wether," the grass on the last field to be sold annually to defray the cost of a feast on Whit-Monday. He also drew up certain articles for the regulation

of this bequest. Two persons were to be chosen annually, to be called caterers, who should go to Leicester to what inn they should think proper, when a calf's-head should be provided for their breakfast; and when the bones were picked clean, they were to be put on a dish and served up with the dinner. Likewise the innkeeper was to provide two large rich pies for the caterers to take home, that their families might partake of some of their festivities. Likewise there should be provided for each person a short silk lace, tagged at both ends with silver, being equipped with which, they should all proceed to Enderby, and sell the grass of "the Wether" to the best bidder; from thence they should go to the meadow and dismount, and each person should take a small piece of grass from the field and tie it round their tagged lace, and wear it in their hats, and ride in procession to the High Cross in Leicester, and there throw them among the populace; from thence proceed to their inn, and go in procession to St. Mary's Church, where a sermon was to be preached for the benefit of a hospital founded by Henry, Earl of Lancaster. When the service was over, a deed should be read by the clergyman concerning the gift, and the church adorned with flowers. When the ceremony was concluded, they were to return

to their inn to dinner and close the day with mirth and festivity.[1]

The ceremonies have somewhat varied in course of years, but the following account (slightly abridged) in *Leicestershire Notes and Queries* shows that the main features of the function still survive:—The caterer orders lunch at the inn at Enderby at 11 A.M., consisting of flat, stilton, and cream cheese, butter, various cakes, cucumber, raddish, watercress, &c., with plenty of home-brewed ale, which makes a hearty meal. He then proceeds to sell the grass on the Wether. He then, with the riders, eighteen in number, proceeds to an inn in Leicester, where dinner has been previously ordered, together with a lunch for ten inmates of Trinity Hospital, which latter must consist of calf's-head, bacon, &c., and one quart of ale each. When the riders arrive at the inn, the custom is to drink from a quart of ale before alighting, the oldest of the Hospitallers having thrown the bones of the calf's-head under the horse of the first to arrive. The riders are then shown into the dining-room, and an ample meal is served. Dinner concluded, two bottles of brandy are brought, and all standing, drink "to the immortal memory of John o' Gaunt." The table is then spread

[1] *Cf.* Throsby's "History of Leicester," quoted by C. J. Billson in "Folk-Lore of Leicestershire."

with dessert, and the bill having been called for, to see how far the money will hold out, the evening is spent in conviviality.

At the annual sale of the grass of the Wether the ancient custom of passing a penny round the table during the bidding is observed. Prior to the dinner the company formerly used to ride through the neighbouring brook, the Soar, which is said in rainy weather "to wash the wether's breech," but this part of the ceremony of the day seems to have been abandoned.

A meadow-mowing custom prevails at Desford.[1] In the manor there are eighteen reeve-houses, the owners of which have the reeve-meadow annually in succession. The reeve for the year has to find a dinner for the court baron, to pay £2 to the steward, and to provide prizes at the "meadow-mowing," which consists of athletic sports for the labourers. They indulge in wrestling, running, and other games. No reeve-house is ever wholly pulled down, otherwise the owner loses his rights. So when a house has to be rebuilt, some portion of the old building, a chimney or a doorway, is left standing.

The harvest is drawing near, and several customs linger on connected with the feast of the ingathering. Agricultural depression has killed many of them, and the farmers

[1] *Leicestershire Notes and Queries.*

are no longer able to dispense that open-handed hospitality with which they were accustomed to regale their labourers in the good old days when agriculture was a thriving industry. Lammas Day, August 1st—the ancient Loaf-mass, when a loaf of bread made of the first ripe corn was used in the service of the Holy Communion—remains in the calendar, but its observance as a feast of the first-fruits has passed away. St. Roch's Day, August 16th, formerly observed as the harvest-home day, is scarcely known. We have our harvest-festivals in our churches now, and they are always well observed. The churches are beautifully decorated with fruit and flowers, and the villagers always attend in large numbers, and sing with much cheerfulness and fervour such hymns as—

"We plough the fields and scatter
The good seed on the land."

These harvest-festivals are a fairly modern institution, but they have now become almost universal, and few villages at the present time have no harvest-thanksgiving services.

The old method of celebrating the feast of the ingathering was not connected with any religious observance, and many curious customs are associated with it. The old Pagan autumn feast, as Mr. Green says, "lingered on unchallenged in the village

harvest-home, with the sheaf, in old times a symbol of the god, nodding gay with flowers and ribbons on the last waggon." Canon Atkinson states that we cannot use the past tense even yet in speaking of this accompaniment of the harvest-home, although the "harvest-home" is no longer the village festival, but one that is celebrated on divers farms all comprised in the same parochial districts. In Yorkshire the "mell-sheaf," the "mell-supper," or "kern-supper," are still well known in many a primitive farmhold or hilly daleside occupation throughout the northern districts.[1] The kern-supper is given to the labourer by the farmer on the completion of the cutting of the corn. Mr. Henderson, in his "Folk-Lore of North England" (1879), remarks: "Our most characteristic festive rejoicings accompany the harvest, namely, the mell-supper and the kern-baby. In the northern part of Northumberland the festival takes place at the close of the reaping, not the ingathering. When the sickle is laid down, and the last sheaf of corn set on end, it is said that they have 'got the kern;' the reapers announce the fact by loud shouting, and an image crowned with wheat-ears, and dressed in a white frock and coloured ribbons, is hoisted on a pole by the tallest

[1] *Cf.* "Forty Years in a Moorland Parish," by Canon Atkinson, p. 240.

and strongest men of the party. All circle round this 'kern-baby' or harvest-queen, and proceed to the barn, where they set the image on high, and proceed to do justice to the harvest-supper." In some places "this nodding sheaf, the symbol of the god," is quite small, fashioned with much care and neatness, and plaited with wonderful skill; in others it is large and cumbersome, taking a strong man's strength to bear it.

In Scotland it is called "the maiden," and is dressed like a doll. It is preserved in the farmhouse above the chimneypiece. The youngest girl in the harvest-field is supposed to have the privilege of cutting "the maiden." Its head is formed of ears of oats; a broad blue ribband is tied in a bow round the neck, and a skirt of paper completes the costume of "the maiden." In the north-east of Scotland the last sheaf is known as the "clyack," or "cailleach" (old woman),[1] and is dressed up and made to look as much like an old woman as possible. It has a white cap, a dress, a little shawl over the shoulders, fastened with a sprig of heather, an apron turned up to form a pocket, which is stuffed with bread and cheese, and a sickle is stuck in the string of the apron at the back. At the harvest-feast the cailleach is placed at the

[1] Illustration of this appears in *Folk-Lore* of June 1895, and in the *Transactions of the Folk-Lore Congress*, 1891.

head of the table, the company drink to her, and in the evening the lads dance with her. She is therefore the recipient of much honour. Scottish harvest customs are extremely interesting, but we may only just venture to cross the Tweed, as our English customs only concern us now, and the manners of our Scottish neighbours would require a separate volume.

In Cornwall the last sheaf is called "the neck," and is gaily decked with ribbons. In some places two strong-voiced men are chosen, and placed one with the sheaf, and the other on the opposite side of the valley. One shouts, "I've gotten it." The other replies, "What hast gotten?" The first then shouts back triumphantly, "I've gotten the neck."

In Devonshire, the home of many old customs, a similar practice prevails. A small quantity of the ears of the last corn is twisted or tied together into a curious kind of figure, which is brought home with great acclamations, hung up over the table, and kept till the next year. The owner would think it extremely unlucky to part with this, which is called "a knack."[1]

The reapers whoop and holloa—

> "A knack! a knack! a knack!
> Well cut, well bound, well shocked."

[1] "Folk-lore Rhymes," G. F. Northall, p. 257. This word is evidently the same as the Cornish "neck," mentioned above.

The old song which accompanied the last load to the barn varies in different districts. The usual form is—

"Harvest-home! harvest-home!
We've ploughed, we've sowed,
We've reaped, we've mowed,
We've brought home every load.
Hip, hip, hip, harvest-home!"

Or as they say in Berkshire—

"Whoop, whoop, whoop, harvest-whoam!"

Very attractive are the glimpses of rustic life which harvest customs give, especially in East Anglia. "The sun is setting behind the old windmill as we cross the field of stubble; from a group of harvesters comes a woman who, with a low curtsey, asks us for 'largess.' As we pass along we hear merry shouts and cheering, and presently round the corner of the road comes a fine team of horses, mounted by two lads dressed in the garb of women, while the waggon is filled with the last load of corn, and merry youths and maidens ride above it. The waggon stops, and the rider gives us three cheers, and then on they go to the village-green amidst much laughter and bright songs." Evidently the East Anglian folk have not quite forgotten how to laugh, as one of their chroniclers asserts.

The custom is known locally as "Hallering Largess," and has been described as a certain rhythmic chant, rendered with action and gesture, and followed by a certain number of shouts, in return for gifts. When they have received the offering they shout thrice the words, "Halloo, largess," which may be a corruption of *à la largesse*. The ritual appears to be as follows:—The labourers gather in front of the house, and form a ring by joining hands. They bow their heads very low towards the centre of the circle, and give utterance to a low deep mutter, saying, "Hoo-Hoo-Hoo;" then they jerk their heads backwards and utter a shrill shriek of "Ah! Ah!" repeated several times. The Lord of the Largess, the leader of the band, then cries, "Holla, largess," which is echoed by the company, and thus the performance ends, a very interesting survival of old usages.

At Duxford, Cambridgeshire, a sheaf of corn is placed on the top of the cart, and the women rush out of the houses and throw water on the returning harvesters, and shout as loud as they can.

The Manx folk have a curious custom of ascending the hills on old Lammas Day, August 12th, and it is supposed to be related in some way to Jephthah's daughter bewailing her virginity upon the mountains. People

who do not climb the hills on that day read devoutly the account of Jephthah's daughter.

In Scotland the reapers seize and "dump" any one who visits the harvest-field. The visitor is lifted up by his or her ankles and armpits, and the lower part of his person[1] is brought into violent contact with the ground. "Head-money" is usually demanded, and, if that is refused, the person has to undergo the unpleasant experience of being "dumped."

The old custom still exists at the parish church of Driffield, Yorks, of ringing the harvest-bell at five o'clock in the morning and at eight in the evening every day during harvest. In some parishes in Yorkshire it used to be the custom to ring the bell at 8 A.M., as a signal that people might begin to glean.

In Hertfordshire the custom of horn-blowing during harvest still exists, and seems to be peculiar to that county.

There are many harvest-home songs in use, and here is one from Berkshire:—

"Here's a health unto our master,
The founder of our feast;
We hope his soul to God will go
When he do get his rest.

[1] *Cf.* "Notes on Harvest Customs;" *Folk-Lore*, 1889.

May everything now prosper
That he do take in hand;
For we be all his servants
As works at his command.

(*Chorus*)—So drink, boys, drink,
And see ye do not spill,
For if ye do ye shall drink two,
For that be master's will.

Here's a health unto our mistress,
That giveth us good ale;
We hope she'll live for many a year
To cheer us without fail.
She is the best provider
In all the country round;
So take your cup and drink it up,
None like her can be found."
(*Chorus as before.*)

This song is also sung at Surrey harvest-suppers. Full bumpers of ale are drunk by couples at a time, as with a loving-cup, while the song is sung, and if any is spilt, the ceremony is repeated until the bumpers are drained of their contents. (*Guildford Newspaper.*)

From Surrey we also have the following curious harvest ditty :—

" I've been to France, and I've been to Dover;
I've been roving all the world over,
Over, and over, and over.
Drink half your liquor, and turn the bowl over,
Over, and over, and over."

The verse is sung while a horn of ale is kept by one of the company balanced on a wooden bowl held upside down, and an endeavour is made to drink half the contents. When the ale is finished, the horn is tossed up in the air and caught in the bowl. (*Guildford Newspaper.*)

The harvest-home in the good old days was a joy and delight to both old and young. Shorn of much of its merriment and quaint customs, it still exists; but modern habits and notions have deprived it of much of its old spirit and light-heartedness. In spite of agricultural depression and diminished income, it would be well to preserve this feature of old country-life, which confers many benefits on all. When labourers simply regard harvest-time as a season when they can earn a few shillings more than usual, and take no further interest in their work or in the welfare of their master, all brightness vanishes from their industry; their minds become sordid and mercenary, and mutual trust, good-feeling, and fellowship cease to exist. In some places the only harvest-custom which survives is that of drinking all the cider or ale that is left, and singing in the fields as long as the drink lasts.

The old rejoicings at sheep-shearing are kept up in some measure in Dorsetshire, when the small farmers invite their friends

to help them in the shearing, and entertain their guests with accustomed hospitality. This is a very ancient custom, which is alluded to by Tusser in his "Five Hundred Points of Husbandry" in the following lines:—

"Wife, make us a dinner; spare flesh, neither corn;
Make wafers and cakes, for our sheep must be shorn;
At sheep-shearing neighbours none other things crave,
But good cheer and welcome like neighbours to have."

Roast-goose is still a standing dish at Michaelmas, and the presentation of geese by those who have them to bestow is still often observed—a practice certainly to be encouraged. The custom probably arose from the usual practice of tenants bringing fat geese to their landlord when they paid their rent, in order to propitiate him, and to make him kind and lenient in the matters of rent, repairs, and the renewal of leases.

One of the more curious of local customs was observed, until recent years, on August 22nd at Biddenham, Bedfordshire. In that village, shortly before noon, a little procession of villagers was formed, who conveyed a white rabbit, decorated with scarlet ribbons, through the village, singing a hymn in honour of St. Agatha. All the young unmarried women who happened to meet this proces-

sion extended the first two fingers of the left hand, pointing towards the rabbit, at the same time saying—

> "Gustin, Gustin, lacks a bier!
> Maidens, maidens, bury him here."

This custom is said to date from the first Crusade. It is certainly curious, and its origin is shrouded in obscurity. Several works on popular customs speak of it as still surviving; but the Vicar of Biddenham informs us that the custom does not appear to have existed during the lifetime of the present inhabitants.

October 25th, St. Crispin's Day, is observed by the shoemakers of Scarborough, and also in parts of Northumberland and Sussex, who hold a dinner on this feast of their patron-saint, and burn flambeaux on the sands. These torches are probably substitutes for the altar lights which the Shoemakers' Guild provided for their Chantry Chapel in pre-Reformation times. The Reformation put out the lights, but the torches and the dinner remained.

[*Note.*—"Kern-baby." Mrs. Gomme has three specimens of the kern-baby; one from Devonshire, one from Cornwall, and one from Scotland; but she believes that the custom has quite recently died out in those parts of the country.]

CHAPTER IX

The Fifth of November—Berks songs—Beckley and Heddington, Oxon—Town and Gown at Oxford—Harcake or Tharcake, Lancashire—Local cakes—St. Clement's Day—"Souling" on All Souls' Day—Allan apples at Penzance—Butchers' custom.

OUR historical customs, or customs which owe their origin to events in the history of our country, are not very numerous. Besides Royal Oak Day, which has already been described, we have the famous commemoration of the discovery of Gunpowder Plot on November 5th. This is a very popular festival, when bonfires are lighted everywhere, and "guys"—a perpetual memorial of the famous Guy Fawkes—are burnt with much accompaniment of squibs and crackers.

Probably few of those who take part in these functions recall to mind that November 5th was instituted by the House of Commons as "a holiday for ever in thankfulness to God for our deliverance and detestation of the Papists;" but this ignorance does not prevent them from keeping up the custom and

enjoying the excitement of the bonfire and fireworks.

The usual rhyme which the youths repeat when they carry round the guy and collect fuel for their bonfires or largess for themselves is as follows :—

"Please to remember the Fifth of November,
Gunpowder treason and plot;
I see no reason why gunpowder treason
Should ever be forgot."

A common variation of the last two lines is—

"When the king and his train had nearly been slain,
Therefore it shall not be forgot."

The Berkshire boys used to add the words :—

"Our king's a valiant soldier
With his blunderbuss on his shoulder;
Cocks his pistol, draws his rapier;
Pray give us something for his sake here.
A stick and a stake, for our good king's sake.
If you won't give one, I'll take two;
The better for me, the worse for you.
Chorus—
Holloa, boys, holloa, boys, make the bells ring;
Holloa, boys, holloa, boys, God save the Queen."

"King" is evidently the correct rhyme for "ring," but on the accession of her

Majesty Queen Victoria the correctness of the poetry was sacrificed to the appropriateness of the address to the reigning sovereign. Some of the rhymes tell us of the nefarious deeds of wicked Guy Fawkes, and the following, we believe, is still extant :—

"Guy Fawkes and his companions did contrive
To blow the House of Parliament up alive
With threescore barrels of powder down below,
To prove Old England's wicked overthrow;
But by God's mercy all of them got catched,
With their dark lantern and their lighted match.
Ladies and gentlemen sitting by the fire,
Please put hands in pockets and give us our desire;
While you can drink one glass, we can drink two,
The better for we, and none the worse for you."
Rumour, rumour, pump a derry,
Prick his heart and burn his body,
And send his soul to Purgatory."

From Beckley, Oxon, we have the following rhyme, which is still said by the youths when collecting wood for their fire :—

"Don't you know 'tis the Fifth of November,
Gunpowder Plot? We've come to beg
A stick or a stake,
For King George's sake.
If you don't give us one,
We'll take two;
Then ricket a racket,
Your door shall go."

At Headington, in the same county, the boys sing the following verses :—

"Remember, remember,
The Fifth of November,
Bonfire night;
We want a faggot
To make it alight.
Hatchets and duckets,
Beetles and wedges,
If you don't give us some
We'll pull your old hedges;
If you don't give us one,
We'll take two;
The better for us,
And the worse for you."

A slight menace is very common in these Gunpowder Plot ditties. At several places at the present time it is customary to celebrate Guy Fawkes Day with much elaborate ceremonial, torchlight processions, composed of people in very fancy dress costume. The display of fireworks in many towns is very grand and elaborate. At Hampstead very elaborate preparations are made; several bonfire clubs combine in making the display effective, and the procession is usually very picturesque and imposing. One car at the last celebration, representing the British Isles and the Colonies, with attendant beefeaters and pages, was sent by Sir Augustus Harris.

On the South Coast these observances

are usual in several towns. At Rye the "Borough Bonfire Boys" organise a procession, light bonfires, and burn effigies. At Folkstone the procession consists of carts and waggons, gaily decorated, and containing *tableaux vivants*, contributed by the Friendly Society. The Ancient Order of Druids send a party representing the Ancient Britons. A blacksmith's forge, a butcher's car, fire brigades, and other shows, make up the procession, and torches and Chinese lanterns, and bands of music, add brightness to the festival. At Marylebone and Bermondsey the bonfire clubs are much in evidence. Political guys are not unknown, and at the last occasion the Sultan of Turkey thrashing a poor Armenian was one of the representations. In the old Middlesex suburban town of Enfield a huge fancy-dress procession is formed on the evening of Guy Fawkes Day; thousands of people throng the streets, and fires of all colours blaze along the line of route. Groups allegorical of local traditions associated with the old Enfield chase, Colonel Somerset's staghounds, the Herts Yeomanry, fire brigades, and schools, form interesting features in the long procession. Money is collected for the Cottage Hospital, and a monster bonfire is lighted on the green and the traditional guy burned.

The almost universal observance of the

day, and the similarity of the modes of commemorating the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, obviate the necessity of recording the manners and customs of the English people on this occasion.

At Oxford, the "Town and Gown" rows on November 5th, though shorn of some of their ferocity, are not quite things of the past, and the College authorities have recently adopted the fashion of "gating" their men, in order to prevent the usual encounters. Why on this particular night the gentlemen of the University and the roughs of the town should seek to engage in deadly conflict and fight and bruise each other, is one of the mysteries of civilisation. One is not altogether surprised to read of the stern battles of mediæval times, when there was much antagonism between Town and Gown, and the butchers fought with their cleavers, and were therefore compelled to set up their shops outside the city walls, and when the tower of Carfax Church was obliged to be taken down, as it became a point of vantage for the belligerents. But why these contests should be carried on in the nineteenth century, and waged only on the night of the famous Fifth, are questions which no one seems able to decide.

In Lancashire, in the neighbourhood of Oldham, it is still the custom at the begin-

ning of November to make what is called Harcake. The origin of this custom is lost in the mists of antiquity. It is probably a relic of an ancient pagan festival. *Har* was one of the names of Odin, and the word appears in many place-names in the neighbourhood, *e.g.*, Harrof, Hargrave, Hargate, &c. In this making of harcake there is doubtless preserved the memorial of an old Norse festival.

In Nodal and Milner's "Lancashire Glossary" the word is given as Tharcake; but this need not sever its connection with Northern mythology, as Tharcake or Thor-cake suggests the name of the deity in whose honour the special cake was eaten. It is a kind of oatmeal gingerbread, made of meal, treacle, and butter, and is sometimes called parkins.

The whole subject of special local cakes is full of interest. There are the Eccles cakes, made at Eccles, in Lancashire, which resemble the famous cakes of Banbury. Bath is famous for its buns as well as its waters, and Richmond for its maids-of-honour. Everton boasts of its toffy, and Shrewsbury of its cakes, alluded to in Shenstone's "Schoolmistress" when he sings—

"Ah! midst the rest, may flowers adorn his grave
Whose art did first these dulcet cates display."

The eve of All Saints' Day (November 1st),

anciently called All-Hallow Eve, was a great night for the witches, especially in Lancashire; but the old beldames have fled away on their broomsticks, and old customs have gone with them. But on All Souls' Day, November 2nd which was first instituted in the monastery of Clugny in 993 A.D., it is still customary for children to go "a-souling," and soul-cakes are still offered and eaten in Shropshire on this day. One of the numerous versions of the "soulers" is as follows:—

"Soul! soul! for a soul-cake!
I pray, good missis, a soul-cake!
An apple, a pear, a plum, or a cherry,
Any good thing to make us merry.
One for Peter, two for Paul,
Three for Him who made us all.
Up with the kettle and down with the pan,
Give us good alms and we'll be gone.

"The roads are very dirty,
My shoes are very thin,
I've got a little pocket
To put a penny in.
If you haven't got a penny,
A ha'penny will do;
If you haven't got a ha'penny,
May God help you."

This is sung at Wellington, Salop.

There are many variants of these rhymes,[1] which need not be enumerated. Let it suffice

[1] *Cf.* "English Folk-Rhymes," p. 220.

to mention one Staffordshire rhyme, which runs as follows :—

"Soul-day, soul-day,
We've been praying for the soul departed;
So pray, good people, give us a cake,
For we are all poor people,
Well known to you before;
So give us a cake for charity's sake,
And our blessing we'll leave at your door.
Soul! soul! for an apple or two;
If you have no apples pears will do;
If pears are scarce, then cakes from your pan,
Give us our souling, and we'll be gone."[1]

A curious rhyme is given in Shropshire Folk-lore which is still sung or drawled :—

"The cock sat in the yew tree,
The hen came chuckling by,
I wish you all good morning,
And a good fat pig in the sty.
A good fat pig in the sty!"

"Souling" still lingers on in Cheshire.

The Day of St. Clement (November 23rd), the patron saint of blacksmiths, is still observed, and St. Clement Danes' Church, London, has his emblem, an anchor, for its vane. There are many legends concerning the connection of "Old Clem" with the craft, which need not now be recorded. One of these relates to the time of King Alfred, who made St. Clement king of all other

[1] Poole's "Customs, Legends, and Superstitions of Staffordshire."

tradesfolk. An old traditional song, called the "Jolly Blacksmith," is said to have been sung on the occasion, and is very spirited:—

"Here's a health to jolly blacksmith,
The best of all good fellows,
Who works at his anvil
While the boy blow the bellows.
For it makes his bright hammer to rise and to fall,
Says the old cob to the young cob and the old cob of all.

Chorus. Twankie dillo, twankie dillo, dillo, dillo, dillo, dillo, dillo,
With a roaring pair of bagpipes made of the green willow."

The children in East Sussex still go *Catterning* and *Clemmening*, and the blacksmiths do not forget the day. They used to dress up a figure of "Old Clem," and put him in front of the inn where they held their feast. The rhyme sung in Sussex is—

"Cattern'[1] and Clemen' be here, here, here,
Give us your apples and give us your beer;
One for Peter, two for Paul,
Three for Him who made us all.
Clemen' was a good man,
Cattern' was his mother:
Give us your best,
And not your worst,
And God will give your soul good rest."

[1] Cattern' = St. Catherine, whose feast is November 25th, formerly much observed by the Buckinghamshire lacemakers.

In the Government dockyards "Old Clem" is still revered, and his figure is dressed up; the masters often give the blacksmiths a wayz-goose, a leg of pork stuffed with sage and onions, on this day. At the feast the first toast is—

> "Here's to old Vulcan, as bold as a lion,
> A large shop and no iron,
> A big hearth and no coal,
> And a large pair of bellows full of holes."

The Jolly Blacksmith's song is always sung. The next toast is—

> "True hearts and sound bottoms,
> Checked shirts and leather aprons."

Then follows a song beginning—

> "Tubal Cain, our ancient father,
> Sought the earth for iron and ore;
> More precious than the glittering gold,
> Be it ever so great a store."

"To the memory of 'Old Clem,' and prosperity to all his descendants!" is the toast of the evening.

The Brighton Railway Company's smiths have in recent years observed these customs. At the White Horse Inn, Castle Street, London, a supper is held, and "Old Clem's" memory duly recorded. One of the farriers is dressed in a new apron with gilt tags.

The anvils used to be fired with gunpowder, but this part of the ceremonial has now been discontinued.

"Going a-gooding" on St. Clement's Day[1] is still practised at Market Bosworth, Leicestershire. The boys go round collecting apples and money, and sing a rhyme very similar to one already quoted. It runs—

"St. Clement's, St. Clement's, St. Clement's is here;
Apples and pears are very good cheer;
One for Peter (*the rest as before*)."

On the nearest Saturday to Hallow E'en the fruiterers of Penzance display in their windows very large apples, known locally as "Allan" apples. The eating of them is supposed to bring good luck, and the girls put them under their pillows in order to dream of their sweethearts.

The same custom with some variations prevails at St. Ives, in the same county. "Allan Day" is a great children's festival, and hundreds would deem it a great misfortune to go to bed on Allan night without the time-honoured Allan-apple beneath their pillows. They fully expect to dream of the future husband or wife, the fulfilment of the dream depending on the silence observed before eating the apple. The full ritual involves

[1] Billson's "Folk-Lore of Leicestershire."

rising before dawn and sitting under a tree, clad in the nightdress only, and then eating the Allan apple. Two results are then due; the future husband or wife becomes present, and if (there is a great virtue in the "if") the sitter be not cold, then he or she will not be cold during the winter. The penitential ritual has however happily fallen into abeyance.

A curious custom of taking a marrow-bone from the butchers was formerly practised at Camborne on the Sunday nearest to Martinmas, and has now been revived. A number of men, known as the "Homage Committee," go round the market with hampers, which are soon filled with marrow-bones, and afterwards visit the public-house as "tasters." One night in November is known in Padstow as "Skip-skop night," when the boys in the place go about with a stone in a sling, with which they strike violently the doors of the houses, and ask for money to make a feast.

Butchers still in some few places keep up the custom of serenading a newly married couple of their own trade with the "marrow bones and cleavers." This serenade takes place on the eve of the marriage night, outside the house of the newly married pair, in return for which the serenaders expect money or ale and cake.

CHAPTER X

Local customs—Gloves in Church of Abbots Ann, Andover — Dunmow Flitch — Skimmerton-riding in Wilts and Dorset—Riding the Stang.

VERY remarkable are many of the local customs which linger on in some of our towns and villages, and which are not confined to any special day in the calendar.

At Abbots Ann, near Andover, it is the custom to hang effigies of hands and arms near the pulpit of the church on the left-hand side of the nave, outside the chancel arch, in memory of any girl who died unmarried. On the right of the arch chaplets are hung. These effigies are probably imitations of gloves, as in early times it was not unusual to hang up in the churches mittens or gloves at funerals. Nor was the custom confined to the memorials of the dead.

Sometimes to hang up a glove in a church was the authorised method of challenging a rival to mortal combat. Sir Walter Scott in

his "Rokeby"[1] alludes to this practice in the lines—

> "Edmund, thy years were scarcely nine
> When challenging the clans of Tyne
> To bring their best my brand to prove,
> O'er Hexham's altar hung my glove;
> But Tynedale nor in tower nor town
> Held champion meet to take it down."

In the Life of Barnard Gilpin (1517–1583), Rector of Houghton-le-Spring, it is recorded that on entering his church the worthy man observed a glove hanging up, and was informed by the sexton that it was meant as a challenge to any one who would take it down. The vicar removed the glove, and admonished his congregation on the wickedness of such savage practices. (*Notes and Queries.*)

The custom of hanging up in the churches garlands of roses with a pair of gloves cut out of white paper, which had been carried before the corpses of young unmarried women at their funerals, used to prevail in many parishes in Derbyshire. However, during recent years they have almost all been removed. We understand that the garlands are still hanging in Ashover Church, and possibly at Flamborough, Yorkshire. The practice seems to have been very general in

[1] Canto vi. 21.

the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and lingered long in Derbyshire. The following lines attributed to Anna Seward refer to the custom :—

> "The gloves suspended by the garland's side,
> White as its snowy flowers with ribband tied;
> Dear village! long may these wreaths funereal spread—
> Simple memorials of the early dead."

The Dunmow Flitch is a well-known matrimonial prize for which happy couples who have never quarrelled during the first year of their wedded life strive to establish their claims before an impartial jury composed of six maidens and six bachelors. There is a judge arrayed in a full-bottom wig, and advocates plead for and against the claims of the suitors. The examination and cross-examination of the claimants usually occasion much mirth, and when the couples are pronounced worthy of the flitch, they are chaired and carried round the meadow, finally halting at an open-air stage, where they publicly take the customary oath, kneeling on rough stones.

This custom has not been observed continuously. For several years it entirely lapsed, until in 1855 the historical novelist Harrison Ainsworth revived the custom and presented the prize. He wrote a novel entitled "The Flitch of Bacon." The fol-

lowing record of the proceedings in the year 1701 is full of interest:—

"Dunmow Nuper Priorat. { At a court barron of the right worshippful Sir Thomas May, Knight, then holden on Friday, the 27th day of June, in the year of our Lord 1701, before Thomas Wheeler, Gent., steward of the said manor, it was thus enrolled:

"Homage { Elizabeth Beaumont, spinster, Henriette Beaumont, spinster, Annabella Beaumont, spinster, Jane Beaumont, spinster, Mary Chester, spinster } Jury.

"Be it remembered that at this court it is found and presented by homage aforesaid, that William Parsley and Jane his wife have been married for the space of three years last past, and it is likewise found that William Parsley and Jane his wife, by means of their quiet and peaceable, tender and loving cohabitation for the space of three years aforesaid, are fit and qualified persons to be admitted by the court to receive the ancient and accustomed oath, whereby to entitle themselves to have the bacon of Dunmow delivered unto them according to the custom of the manor. Whereupon at this court in full and open court came the said William Parsley and Jane his wife in their persons, and humbly prayed that they might be per-

mitted to take the oath. Whereupon the steward and the jury and other officers proceeding with the usual solemnity to the ancient and accustomed place for the administration of the oath and receiving the said bacon; that is to say, two great stones lying near the church door, where the said William Parsley and Jane kneeling down on the two stones, the said steward did administer the oath in these words, or to the effect following—

"'You do swear by custom of confession,
That you never made nuptial transgression,
Nor since you were married man and wife
By household brawls or contentious strife,
Or otherwise at bed or board,
Offended each other in deed or word.
Or in a twelvemonth's time and a day
Repented not in thought anyway,
Or since the church clerk said Amen
Wished yourselves unmarried again,
But continue true and in desire
As when you joined hands in the quire.'

"And immediately thereupon William Parsley and Jane Parsley, claiming the said bacon, the court pronounced sentence for the same in these words, or to the effect following—

"'Since to these conditions without any fear
Of your own accord you do freely swear,
A whole gammon of bacon you do receive
And bear it away with love and good leave;
For this is the custom of Dunmow well known;
Though the pleasure be ours, the bacon's your own.'

And accordingly a gammon of bacon was delivered unto the said William Parsley and Jane Parsley with the usual solemnity.

Ex^d. p^r. Th^o Wheeler, gent, steward, Will^m Hague." 1701 (William III.).

The *Spectator* observed with some cynical reflection that when the bacon was first given away only two couples successfully formulated their claims. The first couple was a sea-captain and his wife, who had not seen each other after their wedding until the day the prize was awarded; the second was an honest pair who resided in the neighbourhood of Dunmow, the husband being a man of plain good sense and a peaceable temper—*the woman was dumb.* A recent claimant was a Yeoman of the Royal Bodyguard, over sixty years of age, and the bravery which carried him through the Crimea and the Indian Mutiny assisted him doubtless in undergoing the trial of procuring the Dunmow Flitch.

Those who are not so fortunate in their pursuit of matrimonial bliss have sometimes most unpleasant experiences to undergo. In cases of great scandal and immorality the villagers take the law into their own hands, and organise a serenade of rough music in order to express their disapproval. It is called a Skimmenton or Skimmenton-Riding in Wilts, or sometimes Housset, Hooset, or

Wooset. In Berks the "Hooset" is a draped horse's-head, carried at a "Hooset Hunt." The orthodox procedure in North Wilts on the occasion of a Skimmenton is as follows:—The party assembles before the house of the offenders, armed with tin pots and pans, and perform a serenade for three successive nights. Then after an interval of three nights the serenade is repeated for three more. Then another interval of the same duration, and a third repetition of the rough music for three nights. On the last night the effigies of the offenders are burned. The word and the custom have emigrated to America. It is the strongest expression of outraged public opinion that a country district is capable of conveying. It checks open profligacy, brands with infamy all gross instances of licentiousness, and exposes to ridicule those couples who by their quarrels disturb the quiet and order of the neighbourhood. The three causes for riding the Skimmenton are—(i.) When a man and his wife quarrel, and he gives up to her; (ii.) when a woman is unfaithful to her husband, and he patiently submits without resenting her conduct; (iii.) any grossly licentious conduct on the part of married persons. In the neighbourhood of Dorking, Surrey, this kind of rough music is common.

In Dorsetshire it is called Skimmington;

in Scotland "Riding the stang," the peccant party being seated across a pole (or stang) in no very comfortable position. Sometimes they used to sweep the doors of those whom they threatened with similar discipline. A few years ago a famous Skimmerton took place at Whitechurch Canonicorum, West Dorset. In the dusk of the evening a strange noise was heard of the beating of trays and kettles, and three grotesquely attired figures were escorted by a procession of persons in various eccentric costumes, who paraded the village. The figures represented three persons well known to the villagers, a male and two females. The latter were carried by donkeys, and one had a very long tongue tied back to the neck. After their perambulations, the processionists conveyed their figures to a field where a gallows was erected, on which the effigies were hung and afterwards burnt.[1] Mr. Thomas Hardy has immortalised a Skimmerton-riding in his novel entitled "The Mayor of Casterbridge."

"Riding the stang"[2] was once a very popular custom in the North of England. At the Langwathby Rounds, recently a flourishing village festival, all who were found at work on the day of the feast had

[1] *Proceedings of Dorset Field Club*, vol. xiv. p. 182.

[2] Derived from the Saxon word *steng* (Danish *stang*), signifying a long bar or pole.

to ride the stang or pay a forfeit. The amenities of Northallerton still include the time-honoured corrective of riding the stang. A few years ago an occasion for the exercise of this forcible expression of public opinion was furnished by an ostler who had proved unfaithful to his recently married bride. In a small pony-cart an effigy was placed, and the ringing of a bell and the shouts of the populace created much excitement. This was continued for three nights, and on the last the final riding of the stang took place. Two figures were placed in the cart, and carried round the town, after which a bonfire was lit on the green below the church, and after repeating a doggrel rhyme, the crowd proceeded to burn the figures. It is not often, we hope, that the necessity for a genuine Skimmenton or riding the stang arises, and the custom is of course intermittent; but offenders would be wise not to assume that this notable expression of public opinion has quite passed away.

CHAPTER XI

Holy wells—Scottish superstition—Pin-wells—Rag-wells—Well-dressing in Derbyshire—Tissington well-dressing—Endon, Staffordshire—Youlgrave, Derbyshire—St. Alkmund's, Derby—Wishing-wells—Walsingham, Norfolk.

MANY folk customs linger around wells and springs. They are the haunts of the nymphs and sylvan deities, who must be propitiated by votive offerings, and are revengeful when neglected. They cure all manner of diseases, and the *genius loci* must be reverenced with humility and conciliated by gifts in order that wishes may be gratified and cures effected. Town-folk may be ignorant of the virtues of holy wells, but in rural districts, where old customs linger, they are not yet forgotten. Amidst the sights and sounds of nature men are prone to cherish the beliefs and customs of their forefathers. In Scotland this is more especially the case, and the adoration of wells may be encountered in all parts of the country from John o' Groats to the Mull of Galloway.[1]

[1] "Past in the Present," Sir Arthur Mitchell.

Sir Arthur Mitchell states that he has seen at least a dozen wells in Scotland which have not ceased to be worshipped. The cure of children is a special virtue of many of these wells. Anxious mothers make long journeys to some well of fame, bathe the little invalid in its waters, drop an offering into them, and attach a bit of the child's dress to a bush or a tree growing by the side of the well. Pins and nails and bits of rag may constantly be seen in all parts of the Highlands at these hallowed springs.[1] In England too this custom is not unknown. There is a Rag well near Newcastle, so called from the number of shreds of clothing that adorn the bushes at its side. On Holy Thursday the fair maids of Cornwall visit St. Roche's Well, and throw crooked pins or pebbles into the water, and by the bubbles that rise to the surface seek to ascertain whether their sweethearts will be true or false. The same kind of divination is practised also at Madron Well, near Penzance, once very famous on account of the cures wrought by its waters. In Ireland, too, these votive offerings to the spirits of the streams may still be seen, and in Wales, Professor Rhys states that there is a holy well in Glamorganshire between Coychurch and Bridgled, where people suffer-

[1] "Past in the Present," Sir Arthur Mitchell: "Folklore of Scottish Lochs and Springs," Mackinlay.

ing from any malady dip a rag in the water, bathe the affected part, and then place the rag on a tree close to the well. He saw hundreds of these shreds covering the tree, and some had evidently been placed there recently.[1]

The custom of "well-dressing" was originally a pagan rite held in honour of the nymphs, and corresponds with the ancient Roman Fontinalia, or annual flower-festival of the spirits of the streams and fountains. Shorn of its pagan associations and adapted to Christian usage, the time-honoured custom flourishes with pristine vigour. Derbyshire, with the adjacent counties, is the home of "well-dressing." At Tissington, which claims to have the only real survival of the custom, it takes place on Ascension Day; at Goulgrave on June 24th, Midsummer Day; at Derby and Wirksworth at Whitsuntide; at Barton on the Thursday nearest to St. John the Baptist's Day. Hone wrote of the Tissington "well-dressing" as a festivity which is heartily loved and earnestly anticipated, one which draws the hearts of those who were brought up there, but whom fortune had cast in distant places, homeward with an irresistible charm. Elaborate preparations are made for its approach. Flowers are arranged in patterns to form mottoes and

[1] *Folk-Lore*, September 1892.

texts of Scripture, as also devices, such as crosses, crowns, and triangles, while green boughs are added to complete the picture. A recent visitor at one of these functions[1] says, "The name 'well-dressing' scarcely gives a proper idea of these beautiful structures. They are rather fountains or cascades, the water descending from above, and not rising as in a well. Their height varies from ten to twelve feet, and the original stone frontage is on this day hidden by a wooden erection in the form of an arch or some other elegant design. Over these planks a layer of plaster of Paris is spread, and whilst it is wet, flowers without leaves are stuck in it, forming a most beautiful mosaic pattern. On one the large yellow field-ranunculus was arranged in letters, and so a verse of Scripture or a hymn was recalled to the spectator's mind. On another a white dove was sculptured in the plaster and set in a groundwork of the humble violet. The daisy, which our poet Chaucer would gaze upon for hours together, formed diaper-work of red and white; the pale primrose was set off by the rich red of the 'ribes.' Nor were the coral berries of the holly, mountain ash, and yew forgotten; they are carefully gathered and stored in the winter to be ready for the May Day

[1] *Notes and Queries.*

fête. It is scarcely possible to describe the vivid colouring and beautiful effect of these favourites of nature arranged in wreaths and garlands and devices of every hue. And then the pure sparkling water, which pours down from the midst of them on the rustic moss-grown stones beneath, completes the enchantment, and makes this feast of the 'well-flowering' one of the most beautiful of all the old customs that are left in Merrie England."

Around the first well are gathered groups of country-folk, while the clergyman reads the first of the three Psalms appointed for the day, and a hymn is sung. Then all move forward to the next well, where another Psalm is read and another hymn is sung; the Epistle and Gospel are read at the last two wells. Some attribute the origin of the custom to a great drought which visited Derbyshire in 1615, when the wells of Tissington continued to flow, and provided water for the whole neighbourhood; but, as we have said, we must refer the origin farther back to Roman times, and connect it with the ancient pagan festival.

At Endon, in Staffordshire, the festival is held on Royal Oak Day, and a description of the proceedings is not without interest. There are two wells at Endon, the one

very old and almost dry, which has long since fallen into disuse; the other alone supplies the village with water. From a very early hour in the morning the whole village is astir, and the people busy themselves in bedecking the wells for the coming ceremony. Crowds of visitors flock in from all parts of the district, and the village green swarms with eager spectators. The proceedings are under the personal guidance of the vicar of the parish, and at two o'clock a procession of school children is formed at the new well, headed by a band of music. The children wave flags vigorously, and the procession marches to the old parish church, where a solemn service is held, and the villagers attend in large numbers. Hymns and psalms applicable to a thanksgiving service for water are sung, and at the conclusion of the service the procession is re-formed, and marches back to the new well. Then the clergy and choir walk slowly round the well, singing "Rock of Ages" and "A Living Stream so Crystal Clear." The well is adorned, as at Tissington, with a large wooden framework erected in front of it, covered with a surface of clay, and thickly studded with flowers of every kind of hue. "O ye wells, bless ye the Lord!" was the text that garnished the summit. Maypole dances, including the

crowning of the May Queen, occupy the greater part of the afternoon, and in the evening the band plays for dancing, and the Maypole dances are repeated. After dusk there is a display of fireworks. At Youlgrave, in Derbyshire, the festival is observed with much spirit, the day being kept as a general holiday. The clubs hold their annual procession, headed through the village by bands of music, and after parading the streets, attend a short service in the parish church. Up till quite recently "well-dressing" was observed at Buxton, in Derbyshire. A friend of the writer visited the office of the leading local newspaper in order to obtain a report of the last festival, and was grieved to find that it had ceased to be observed two or three years ago. At St. Alkmund's, Derby, "well-dressing" is still practised with much solemnity, and the photograph of the floral decorations of the well on a recent occasion bears witness to the admirable taste and skill of the designers. Also at Bisley, near Stroud, Gloucestershire, there is an annual well-dressing.

Wishing-wells exist in many places, notably at Walsingham, Norfolk, among the meagre remains of the once famous abbey. A little to the north-east of the site of the old monastic church there are two small circular

basins of stone, the waters of which had once miraculous efficacy in curing disorders of the head and stomach. They are no less powerful now, for they procure for the suppliant the gratification of his wishes. In order to attain the desired end, the votary must kneel on a bare stone placed between the wells. He must plunge to the wrist each hand into the water, and then think of what he most earnestly desires, without disclosing his wish to any one. The hands are then withdrawn, and as much of the water as can be contained in the hollow of each is to be swallowed. This wish will then be assuredly accomplished within a twelvemonth, if the efficacy of the solemn rite be not frustrated by the incredulity of the suppliant. A volume might be written of the lingering superstitions of the English people, of charms and portents, belief in witchcraft, and other kindred cults which die hard; but we are at present concerned only with the existing customs of our race, and not with their superstitions and beliefs, except so far as they may be manifested in local usage and ceremonial observances.

CHAPTER XII

Marriage customs — Orange blossoms — Rice-throwing — Wedding-ring — Bride's veil — Shoe-throwing — Custom at Stoke Courcy — Knutsford custom — Chopped straw at weddings — Spur-peal — Holderness customs — Kissing in Somerset — Yorkshire Dale customs — Races for ribbons — Courting customs — Taking Day at Crayon — Cornish miners' custom — Shooting the bride — The Sin-eater — Funeral customs — Passing bell — Yorks funeral biscuits — Corpse roads — Crape on beehives — Telling the bees — Burying cheeses — Wheat at funerals.

THE three great events of human life—birth, marriage, and death—have naturally drawn around them some of the most curious customs and beliefs. The practice of many of them is almost universal, but few concern themselves with the origin and import of the strange rites which they so often witness. Almost every bride is adorned with orange blossoms. When did their use become general, and why was this particular flower selected? It is well known that nuptial garlands are of the most remote antiquity. Among the Romans the bride was bound to

have a chaplet of flowers or herbs for her head, and among the Saxons both bride and bridegroom were crowned with wreaths kept in the church for that purpose. The nuptial garlands were said to be for the most part rosemary or myrtle, sometimes of corn or flowers. In some countries it is said that the bride is crowned with a garland of prickles, and so delivered to her husband, in order that he might know that he had tied himself to a thorny pleasure. The orange is a Chinese plant, and in China from time immemorial the orange has been considered the emblem of good fortune. Saracen brides used these blossoms in their personal decoration on their wedding-day, which are supposed to signify fruitfulness. The custom was probably introduced to Western Europe by the Crusaders. Another explanation, which is doubtful, avers that the orange was the golden apple of Juno, which grew in the garden of the Hesperides, and that, as the golden apple was presented by that goddess to Jupiter on their wedding-day, so orange blossoms now adorn our brides. These classical interpretations of the origin of the custom can scarcely be accepted.

The bride and bridegroom at weddings are also deluged with rice. Why is rice thrown on these occasions? This custom is also of Chinese origin, and a curious legend is said to account for the origin of the practice.

Fifteen hundred years before Christ there lived in the province of Shansi a famous sorcerer called Chao. A man named P'ang was just going to be married, and came to consult the oracle. He was informed by Chao that he would die in six days. Not quite satisfied with the result of the augury, he consulted a sorceress, fair Peachblossom, and obtained the same prognostication; but the sorceress promised to avert the catastrophe by charms. Chao was astonished to see P'ang walking about on the seventh day, and recognising that Peachblossom's power was stronger than his, he determined to destroy her. This could only be done by very careful strategy. So he went to her simple parents, and pretended to seek her in marriage for his son. The parents consented; marriage-cards were duly exchanged; but the unlucky day was chosen for the wedding when the Golden Pheasant was in the ascendant. So surely as the bride entered the red nuptial chair, the spirit-bird would destroy her with his powerful beak. But wise Peachblossom knew all these things, and "Fear not; I will go and defeat him," she said. So she ordered rice to be thrown out of doors, which the spirit-bird made haste to devour; and while his attention was thus occupied, Peachblossom stepped into the bridal chair and passed on her way unscathed. That is said to be the

reason why we throw rice at weddings, and we hope it may always be effectual in warding off the attacks of the Golden Pheasant. Whether the legend accounts for the custom or not, it is undoubtedly of Chinese origin, and probably is taken to signify a good wish that plenty may always follow the fortunes of the newly-wedded pair.

The use of the wedding-ring dates back to pagan times, and the placing of it on the fourth finger of the left hand (a custom founded on the idea that on that finger there is a vein which proceeds directly to the heart) has been traced through Aulus Gellius, who lived A.D. 150, and Apion in A.D. 40, to the remote times of Egyptian antiquity.

The bride's veil is a relic of the old "care-cloth" held over the heads of bride and bridegroom during the ceremony. This was done in Saxon times, and is also enjoined by both the Sarum and York Uses.[1]

We also throw old shoes after young married folk in order to express our wishes for their good fortune. Probably this was not the original meaning of the custom. The throwing a shoe after a bride was a symbol of renunciation of dominion and authority over her by her father or guardian, and this receipt of the shoe by the

[1] Cf. *Notes and Queries*, No. 182, &c.

bridegroom was an omen that the authority was transferred to him.

In Kent the shoe is thrown by the principal bridesmaid, and the others run after it. It is supposed that she who gets it will be married first. It is then thrown amongst the men, and he who is hit will be first wedded.

There are several wedding customs which are peculiar to localities. At Stoke Courcy, Bridgwater, there is an old custom, which is also found at a few other places in Somerset. A chain or rope is drawn across the street, and the bridal party are not allowed to pass on their way home until the bridegroom has satisfied the demands of the holders for money wherewith to drink the health of the happy couple. The same custom prevails at Minehead. Formerly a chain of flowers was used. Now men hold ropes across the road in six or seven places at short intervals, expecting money at each place before the wedding carriage is allowed to pass.

At Knutsford, Cheshire, silver sand is spread on the pavement in front of the bride's house as soon as she sets out for the church. The sand is arranged in the form of wreaths of flowers, half-moons, and mottoes, and good wishes for the bride's happiness are inscribed. Other houses in the street are also similarly adorned, and

the numerous flowers of sand and hearty good wishes greet the bride on her return to her home.

The origin of this is thus explained. King Canute forded a neighbouring brook, and sat down to shake the sand out of his shoes; while he was doing this a bridal party passed by, and he shook the sand in front of them, and wished them joy, and as many children as there were grains of sand.

Mrs. Gaskell wrote that when she was married all the houses in the town were sanded, and these were the two favourite verses inscribed on the sand:—

"Long may they live,
Happy may they be,
Blest with content,
And from misfortune free."

"Long may they live,
Happy may they be,
Blest with a numerous
Pro-ge-ny."

Unpopular brides in the North have chopped straw or chaff scattered in front of their houses, and this mode of expressing displeasure is sometimes employed in the case of offenders who outrage the moral feelings of their neighbours. This popular indignation is sometimes shown against a wife-beater by scattering chaff or straw in

front of his house amidst groans and angry cries. This custom is similar to the German practice, when only chaste maidens were allowed to wear the bridal wreath; if one of sullied reputation ventured to assume it, the wreath was torn from her head, and sometimes replaced with one of straw, while on the eve of her marriage chaff or chopped straw was scattered before her door. In "Westmorland dialect" it is stated that a girl, when her lover proves unfaithful, is, by way of consolation, rubbed with pease-straw by the neighbouring lads; and when a North Country youth loses his sweetheart by her marriage with a rival, the same sort of comfort is administered by the lasses of the village.

The custom of spreading chaff before a house door prevails at Stratford-on-Avon. "That is the way our people show their feelings for wife-beaters," explained a native of the place.

In the Midland and Northern counties a peal is rung on the evening of the Sunday after the publication of the banns. This is called "Spur-peal," and the Sunday is known as "Spur-Sunday," to *spur* meaning to ask (Scottish *spier*). "To put in the spur-rings," signifies to give the banns to the clergyman, and to be "spurred up" is to have the banns published.

At Holderness the young folks pour hot water on the door-steps after a wedding, in order that other marriages might flow. The idea seems to be to keep the threshold warm for another bride, and not to suggest any unpleasant prophecies with regard to the future of the newly-wedded pair.

At Halse and Bishops Lydeard, Somerset, it is customary for the bridegroom to kiss the bride during the marriage ceremony after placing the ring on her finger. This is a survival of the old nuptial kiss, which formed part of the solemn ceremonial of marriage according to the Sarum Use.

The Cornish maids and men have a custom useful for the encouragement of matrimony. At Crowan, on the Sunday previous to Prayes Crowan fair (July 16th), they go to the parish church, and at the end of the service hasten to Clowance Park, where a large crowd is assembled. Here the young men select their partners for the forthcoming fair; and as sometimes rivals contend for the same beauty, and as sometimes the beauty rejects the generous offers of eager swains, contentions arise, and tussles ensue which afford much amusement to the spectators. "Taking Day," as it is called in Clowance Park, is responsible for many happy weddings.

At Eddinbury, Cheshire, a lover is required

to pay his footing on commencing courting. Recently the happy man refused to conform to this established usage. A huge flour-bag was therefore produced, in which the unfortunate lover was enveloped. It is not stated whether his ludicrous appearance caused the lady to change her mind.

Courtship has its customs too. Girls in Buckinghamshire are wont to pin their woollen stockings to the wall, and repeat the following rhyme:—

"I hang my stocking on the wall,
Hoping my true love for to call;
May he neither rest, sleep, nor happy be,
Until he comes and speaks to me."

Another custom, when a lover is faithless, is to prick the "wedding" finger, and with the blood write upon paper her own name and that of the favoured swain, afterwards to form three rings (still with the blood) joined underneath the writing, dig a hole in the ground, and bury the paper, keeping the whole matter a secret from every one. This is believed to be an unfailing charm.

To see her future husband in a dream, a maiden, on taking off her boots, must place them T-square fashion, and pointed in the direction of the nearest church. She must then say—

"I set my boots in the shape of a T,
Hoping my true love for to see;
The shape of his body, the colour of his hair,
And the daily apparel my true love doth wear."

Then she must get into bed backwards, preserving strict silence. This procedure is to be repeated twice, and then the future husband will appear without fail.[1]

In East Lancashire Friday evening is not considered a correct or suitable time for courtship. The first person spying a couple so engaged enters the house, seizes the frying-pan, and beats on it a tattoo. This arouses the neighbours, who give a warm reception to the offending couple if they do not withdraw hurriedly.

Yorkshire, the home of so many old customs which linger on in the distant dales, has still some strange survivals of wedding customs which can be traced back to very remote antiquity. After the wedding is over, races are run in a field near the church, the prize being a ribbon presented by the bride. This ribbon is a delicate substitute for the bride's garter, which used to be taken off as she knelt at the altar, and offered as a prize for the fleetest runner. The races were formerly run on horseback, and the

[1] Walford's "Antiquarian."

goal was the bride's door. We have here some relics, as Canon Atkinson points out in his "Forty Years in a Moorland Parish," of the ancient manner of wooing, which consisted in carrying off the bride by physical force. Traces of this can still be observed in the Welsh custom of the bridegroom mounting on horseback after the ceremony with his wife behind him, and then being pursued by the wedding guests. This is a strange relic of the old savage practice.

The miners of Cornwall have several curious customs. Not the least remarkable of these is the practice of burning the hats of fathers after the birth of their first child. This still prevails at St. Just.

At Eyam, Derbyshire, a correspondent informs me that it was the custom forty years ago, after the publication of the banns for the third time, for an elderly man who sat in the choir gallery to supplement the parson's words by saying, "God speed 'em well." But the man is probably dead now, and the custom too. Another peculiar wedding custom, of which there appears to be no record, existed at Gunton, Norfolk. A friend of the writer saw, on the occasion of a wedding in the parish church, a man hiding himself behind a tree. When the bride and bridegroom returned from the church, the man fired at or near them.

This custom was called "Shooting the Bride," and was supposed to bring good luck and drive away evil spirits. The same custom prevails in Ireland.[1] The bridal party are saluted with shots from muskets and pistols in every village through which they pass. This often causes many riders to be unseated, as they all gallop fast on these occasions, as at the old Yorkshire weddings, contending for the honour of arriving first at the bridegroom's house.

In Ireland a very strange marriage custom prevails in County Mayo. Gangs of men, dressed in women's dresses, and with straw masks, attend the wedding and dance. The band consists of twelve men, and the leader of the "straw-boys" has the privilege of dancing a measure with the bride.

Burials, too, have still some curious customs which time has spared. The mournful tones of the "passing bell" announce the presence of death in the village. It was formerly rung just when the sufferer was yielding up life, in order that the parishioners might pray for the departing spirit, and after death the "soul-bell" was rung. Our modern "passing bell" corresponds with the latter. Sometimes the sex of the departed is shown by tolling the bell twice for a woman and thrice for a man. In Shropshire

[1] We are not sure whether the custom is now defunct.

all the bells are chimed when the body is being brought to the church, and the custom is called "ringing the dead home." In Hampshire the outer door of the house, through which the body has been carried, is left open until the return of the mourners; otherwise it is supposed that another death will occur before a year has passed away.

In Yorkshire it is customary after a death to send to the friends of the family a bag of biscuits, together with a card bearing the name of the deceased. Sometimes these "funeral biscuits" are small round sponge-cakes, and were formerly known as *arvel bread*—*arvel* or *arval* being the *ale* or feast of the heir when he succeeds to his father's property.[1] This is a relic of the old pagan funeral feasts, and is not unknown in other parts of England. It is probably connected with the curious custom of the Sin-eater, formerly observed in Wales. A poor person was hired (one of them is described as "a long, lean, ugly, lamentable rascal") to perform the duties of Sin-eater. Bread and beer were passed to the man over the corpse, or laid on it; these he consumed, and by this process was supposed to take on him all the sins of the deceased, and free the defunct person from walking after death. The eaters

[1] *Cf.* "Forty Years in a Moorland Parish," Canon Atkinson, p. 228.

of funeral biscuits in modern times little reflect upon the extraordinary superstition of which these dainties are a relic.

At a funeral near Market Drayton in 1893, the body was brought downstairs, a short service was performed, and then glasses of wine and funeral biscuits were handed to each bearer across the coffin. The clergyman, who had lately come from Pembrokeshire, remarked that he was sorry to see that pagan custom still observed, and that he had put an end to it in his former cure. Mr. E. Sydney Hartland has recently maintained in *The Times* that the custom of the Sin-eater still exists in Wales, and mentions the current belief in Derbyshire that every drop of wine drunk at a funeral is a sin committed by the deceased. Hence wine is drunk at the funerals in order to release the soul of the dead from the burden of sin. At Padiham wine and funeral biscuits are always given before the funeral, and the clergyman is always expected to go to the house, and hold a service before the funeral party goes to church. Arval bread is eaten at funerals at Accrington, and there the guests are expected to put one shilling on the plate used for handing round the funeral biscuits.

In the North of England a basin full of sprigs of box is often placed at the door of the house, and every one who attends the

funeral takes a sprig of box, carries it in the procession, and throws it into the grave of the deceased.[1] In the Dale district of Yorkshire, when a young unmarried woman is buried, the bearers are usually six single young women, who wear white scarves and gloves. A dead child is borne by six children, whose sex accords with that of the deceased.

In the same county there are roads called corpse roads, along which the bodies of dead folk are carried on the way to their last resting-place. At Sharleton the coffin must always be carried to Grime Lane End, and then put into the hearse or cart. The mourners always walk to this spot, and then enter the carriages and continue their way along the corpse road to the church. Local custom has sanctioned this usage, which is never varied. Canon Atkinson mentions some similar customs in his "Forty Years in a Moorland Parish."

In many counties the custom exists of putting crape on beehives after the death of their owner. This is solemnly done by his nearest relation; otherwise it is supposed that the bees will die. The bees, too, have to be informed of the death; this is done by tapping the hives and saying, "Brownie, brownie, brownie, your master is dead."

[1] "Curious Church Customs," p. 145.

This is called "waking bees." The custom was practised at Greenham, Berks, during the present year. An old woman reproached herself to the vicar because she had omitted to "tell the bees" when their master had died; but she was relieved to find that a neighbour had been more thoughtful, and had duly performed the ceremony.

Near Bridgwater, when a batch of cheeses is made, one is put aside for the funeral function of the master, should he die within the year. If he outlives the year, the cheese is sold, and always commands a good price.

One other funeral custom is worthy of record. The husband of a lady living in Lancashire recently died. As soon as his death became known, a friend sent to the widow a small sheaf of wheat to be distributed among the relatives present at the funeral. This wheat is evidently an emblem of immortality, and the custom of introducing wheat at a funeral is still known in modern Greece. Chandler, in his "Travels in Greece," states that at a funeral two men followed the body, each carrying on his head a dish of parboiled wheat, which was deposited over the body.[1]

[1] *Notes and Queries*, 7th Series, vi., Nov. 3, 1888. Note by Lady Russell.

CHAPTER XIII

Legal customs—Clameur de Haro—Tynwald Hill and Manx laws—Court of Pie-Powder—Court-Leets and Court-Barons—Court of Exchequer—Borough-English—Gavelkind—Court Leet at Dunchurch—Heriots—Judge's black cap—Gray's Inn—Curious custom at Royal Courts of Justice.

THE statute-book of the laws of England is replete with survivals of ancient customs, and learned legal commentaries disclose the existence of strange local usages, curious tenures and rights, which originated centuries ago, and are held to be valid because they "have been used so long that the memory of man runneth not to the contrary." It is remarkable that the period to which legal memory extends goes as far back as the first year of the reign of Richard I.

One of the more curious survivals of the customs of the Middle Ages may occasionally be observed in the Channel Islands. This is called the Clameur de Haro, and enables a suitor to claim the jurisdiction of the royal courts of the island in case he considers himself wronged and unjustly

treated. A few years ago (March 4, 1890) this custom was exercised in order to prevent the public auction of certain household goods, which was disapproved by the eldest son of the family. The formula uttered by the son, according to ancient usage, was as follows —"Haro! Haro! Haro! à l'aide, mon prince! on me fait tort!" The sale ceased at once, and the matter had to be referred to the royal courts of the island. This appeal can always be resorted to by the inhabitants of the Channel Islands whenever they believe that they are being treated unjustly.

In the Isle of Man, according to ancient custom, the laws of the island are read publicly on the Tynwald Hill once every year in Manx and in English.

This ceremony connects the little Manx nation with the days of the Sagas and the Sea-Kings. On old Midsummer Day, July 5th, the governor goes with a military escort to the Church of St. John, near the famous hill, and is received by the bishop, the clergy, the Keys, Deemsters, coroners, and people. Divine service is held, and then they all march to the mound, the sword of state being carried before the governor. The chief men of the island stand on the lower steps of the mound, and the people gather in crowds on the grass beyond. The coro-

ners proclaim a warning, that no man shall make a disturbance at Tynwald "on pain of death." The Deemsters then recite the Acts of Tynwald, and all retire to the church, where the laws are signed and attested. This method of proclaiming the laws was formerly common amongst all Norse nations. In Iceland the custom survived, but has now been discontinued. The "little Manx nation" alone preserves this badge of ancient liberty. Formerly this method was sorely needed, as the laws only existed in the breasts of the Deemsters, and were called "Breast Laws," being handed down orally from Deemster to Deemster. In the time of the second Earl of Derby, they were first committed to writing.

The oath of the Deemster or Judge is worthy of record in a book dealing with old customs, and is remarkable for its ancient form and phraseology. The words are:— "By this Book and by the holy contents thereof, and by the wonderful works that God hath miraculously wrought in heaven above and in the earth beneath, in six days and seven nights, I do swear that I will without respect, or favour, or friendship, love or gain, consanguinity or affinity, envy or malice, execute the laws of this isle justly between our Sovereign Lord the King and his subjects within this isle, and betwixt party

and party, as indifferently as the herring's backbone doth lie in the midst of the fish."

The court of pie-powder, which still exists at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, has an old-world title, and was formerly attached to all the great fairs and markets in the kingdom. The name is a corruption of the court of pied-poudre (*curia pedis pulverizati*), which is said to be so called from the dirty feet of most of the suitors who frequent the court.[1] It is a court of record incident to every market and fair, of which the steward of the owner of the market or fair is judge, with power to administer justice for all commercial injuries and disputes which may occur in the course of business transacted at the gathering of traders.

The same court exists at Sturbridge Fair, near Cambridge, and so useful is this institution for the administration of rough and ready justice that it has recently been revived at Peterborough. The old Guildford charter granted in 1285 gave special powers for the holding of this court. The charter runs:—"And furthermore we have granted to the aforesaid Mayor and good men that they and their successors shall have for ever a pie-powder court from hour to hour, and all things that belongeth to the same court."

[1] A more satisfactory derivation is *pied puldreaux*, or the court of the pedlars.

It gives full power to this court for collecting dues, settling quarrels and complaints, and deciding disputes. There is no evidence as to the date when these courts were first established in this country. "Over all commercial complaints its authority was absolute —an offender might be taken, a jury of similar traders empanelled on the spot, evidence heard at once, and he would be perhaps commencing his punishment all within an hour."

The ancient fair at Newcastle is opened by the Mayor and Sheriff at the Guildhall, and notice given as follows:—"That a court of pie-powder will be holden during the time of the fair, that is to say, one in the forenoon and another in the afternoon, when rich and poor may have justice administered to them according to the law of the land and the customs of the town." A similar proclamation is made at Modbury, South Devon, on the eve of St. George's Day by the Portreeve. Yarmouth and Boston, Hull and Winchester still retain documents and books relating to this ancient court, and the readers of "Pilgrim's Progress" will find in Bunyan's description of Vanity Fair a very accurate picture of its former methods of jurisdiction. At Bristol it survived till 1885 in the shape of a body calling itself the Tolsey Court, the name being derived from

"tol" or toll. At Ely a proclamation is still read twice a year at the opening of the fair, in the name of "Alwyne, by Divine permission my Lord Bishop of the Diocese of Ely" which commands that "all vagabonds, idle and misbehaving people, cheaters, cozeners, rogues, sturdy beggars, and shifters, do depart out of this fair immediately after this proclamation upon pain of imprisonment and further correction, that His Majesty's subjects may be the more quiet and the Queen's peace the better performed." We believe that tolls in kind still survive at Guildford, where a pint of corn is taken from every sack sold; at Berwick, when one egg in thirty is taken, and at Dungannon where the toll-board requires that the tongue of oxen, cows, heifers, or bullocks, killed between September 29th and December 25th shall be collected "for the proprietor."

The whole history and constitution of our courts of justice are full of quaint usages. Court-leets and court-barons, which are incident to every manor in the kingdom, and are presided over by the steward of the manor, are still held, when the freeholders and tenants of the lord of the manor assemble, and the affairs of the manor are duly transacted.

The names of the courts of justice are

sometimes curious. The Court of Exchequer, which once concerned itself only with the king's revenues, is so called from the chequed cloth, resembling a chessboard, which covered the table, and on which, when certain of the king's accounts were made up, the sums were marked and scored with counters.

Some systems of tenures are very remarkable, notably the custom of Borough English, which prevails in several cities and ancient boroughs in different parts of the kingdom, principally in the North. According to this custom, the land descends from the father on his death to the youngest son only, to the exclusion of all the other children. Authorities differ with regard to the origin of this peculiar rule of descent. Some suppose that it arose from the idea that the younger son, by reason of his tender age, is not so capable as the rest of his brethren to help himself. Others attribute its origin to the ancient right of concubinage which the lord of the fee had with his tenant's wife on her wedding night, and imagine that the tenement descended to the youngest, and not to the eldest, as the former would more certainly be the offspring of the tenant. But it is not known that this custom ever prevailed in England, though it did in Scotland and France. Most probably it arose from the usual habits of

Northern nations, the eldest sons usually migrating from their father's house, and the youngest remaining with him, and thus becoming his heir. It would thus be a remnant of the pastoral habits of our Saxon ancestors, and not a memorial of a hideous right of feudal slavery.

"Borough English" is sometimes known as *Cradle-land* tenure, and prevails at Mere Down, Wilts, in the manors of Lambeth, Hackney, St. John of Jerusalem in Islington, Heston, Edmonton, and Fulham.

Gavelkind is another peculiar system of tenure, which exists almost universally in Kent. At the Conquest the men of Kent obtained certain concessions from the Conqueror, and were allowed to retain their ancient liberties. It is evident, therefore, that the custom of gavelkind before the Norman conquest was the general custom of the country. According to this usage the land is divided after the decease of the father amongst all the sons, and in default of them amongst all the daughters. This is in accordance with the custom of the Germanic races described by Tacitus, *Teutonibus priscis patrios succedit in agros mascula stirps omnis ne foret ulla potens*, and was doubtless introduced to this country by our Saxon forefathers. Gavelkind also prevents the forfeiture of the estates in case of an attain-

der for felony, the following rhyme explaining this peculiar privilege :—

"The father to the bough,
The son to the plough."

The Duke of Buccleuch has revived an ancient custom which dates back to feudal times, and, in his capacity as Lord of the Hundred and Liberty of Knightlow, Warwickshire, holds his Court-leet and Court-baron at the old posthouse, the Dun Cow Hotel, Dunchurch, near Rugby. The court is presided over by the steward. The jury are duly sworn in by the bailiff, who administers an oath, couched in quaint terms, binding them to make a true presentment of such things as would be given them in charge, and "to conceal and keep secret the Queen's counsel and your own and your fellows'." The business of the court, which consists of receiving the reports of the bailiff and the reports of the stewards to the effect that several parishes had failed in their homage to the court by the non-payment of "essoign pence," "charge rent," is gravely proceeded with, and after the various matters have been discussed the jury make their presentment, with the formal proclamation. The court then rises. Subsequently the jury and the others concerned in the busi-

ness of the court are entertained to dinner by the Duke of Buccleuch.

The custom of heriots is also remarkable, and is a relic of villein tenure when the goods and chattels of the tenant belonged to the lord and were liable to seizure by him. Under this custom the lord of the manor is entitled to the best beast, or in some cases the best personal possession, such as a jewel or piece of plate, on the property of the tenant at the time of his death. This is justly considered as one of the most oppressive customs which attend the modern law of tenures, and usually a customary composition in money is agreed upon in lieu of a heriot. But this arrangement is not universal. A few years ago the tenant of the lord of a Sussex manor died, and among his possessions was a very valuable Shire horse. This horse was claimed by the lord as a heriot; the law upheld his claim, and the horse was duly conveyed to his stables. A curious circumstance followed. The horse died a fortnight after its transference to its new quarters, and the cause of its death aroused sundry suspicions.

The frequenters of our courts of justice have observed the judge wearing a black cap when pronouncing sentence of death. The origin of this custon has been variously explained. The covering of the head has been a sign of mourning among many nations.

Jews, Greeks, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, all used to adopt this mode of signifying sorrow for death; but we must look elsewhere for an explanation of the origin of the use of the judge's black cap. The judges were usually clerics, and all members of the clerical orders had the crown of the head shaved. The bare patch on a judge's or barrister's wig is a remnant of the tonsure. Now this tonsure on the crown of his wig the judge in passing sentence of death covers with a black cap, to show that for the time he lays aside his clerical office, it being against the primitive canons for a churchman to have anything to do with the death of a fellow-creature.

Gray's Inn clings tenaciously to tradition. Within its walls may still be heard the "mootings" at which some knotty point of law is discussed in the presence of an eminent Queen's Counsel. The students still drink "to the glorious, pious, and immortal memory of good Queen Bess," whose portrait hangs in the place of honour over the Benchers' table. On grand nights there is still the offering of wine with a morsel of bread upon a silver plate—an almost sacramental observance. And now the honourable Society seeks to restore, in modified measure, that reputation for revels which Queen Elizabeth acknowledged when she praised Gray's Inn as "an house she was

much indebted to, for it always studied for some sports to present to her." Three or four years ago there was a masque, such as Burleigh, the great minister, delighted to witness, and recently there was a revival of "The Comedy of Errors," as it was doubtless presented three hundred and one years ago. With the Middle Temple, Gray's Inn shares the glory of being the only existing place in which plays of Shakespeare saw light. In "Gesta Grayorum" occurs the earliest reference to "The Comedy of Errors," which was produced amid some tumult, owing to the overcrowding of the hall, for we are told that the night "began and continued to the end in nothing but confusion and errors; whereupon it was ever afterwards called the night of errors." No finer setting could be imagined than the bare boards of the beautiful hall, beneath the hammer-beam roof with a background of a richly-designed oak screen, to which age had given a burnished lustre. The costumes were faithful reproductions of the dresses of the period. Serving-men held torches to light the play, as in 1594, and at the close of the play the actors, kneeling in a row, delivered that curious supplication, known as the "Queen's Prayer," from the play of "Ralph Roister Doister," which Her Majesty's servants were wont to speak at the conclusion of their performance. Supper was

eaten to the music of lutes, viols, and virginals from the minstrels' loft. The whole spectacle was a delightful revival of the drama of ancient times.

A peculiar survival of ancient observance is annually witnessed at the royal courts of justice. Certain quit-rent services to the Crown are rendered before the Queen's Remembrancer by the Secondary of the City of London and the City Solicitor. According to records which can be traced back to the thirteenth century, Walter le Brun, farrier in the Strand, occupied a site in St. Clement Danes for a forge, he rendering yearly six horse-shoes and sixty-one nails. A piece of land in the county of Salop was held by Nicholas de Mora, who was to cut two faggots, one with a hatchet and the other with a billhook. The ceremony has been performed for more than six hundred years without intermission. Originally rendered to the King in person, the service was subsequently undertaken before the Barons of the Exchequer, and afterwards before the Cursitor Baron, which office was abolished in 1860. Since then the proceedings have been conducted before the Queen's Remembrancer. The ceremonial commences with the reading of two warrants under seal, one for the appearance of the late Sheriffs to give account, and the other

appointing the Attorney to account on behalf of those officers. The Secondary asks that the warrants may be filed and recorded, which is done. The Queen's Remembrancer then directs the following proclamation to be made:—"Oyez, Oyez, Oyez,—Tenants and occupiers of the piece of waste ground called the Moors, in the county of Salop, come forth and do your service upon pain and peril that shall fall thereon." The City Solicitor thereupon, as agent of the Corporation, cuts one faggot with a hatchet and another with a billhook, as was formerly done at Westminster by the senior alderman below the chair. The next proclamation invites tenants and occupiers of a certain tenement, called the Forge, in the parish of St. Clement Danes, in the county of Middlesex, to come forth and do their service. The City Solicitor then counts first six horse-shoes, and afterwards sixty-one nails, to which the Queen's Remembrancer replies "Good number" after each counting. With this the ceremony concludes, and the horse-shoes, nails, and faggots are distributed among the spectators. The most singular part of the matter, however, is that all trace of the property referred to has been lost for two centuries, and the forge above mentioned was pulled down in a riot in the reign of King Richard II.

CHAPTER XIV

Civic customs—Lord Mayor's Show—Former splendour of civic processions—Livery Companies of London—Civic banquets—Loving-cup—Election of Master of Girdlers' Company—Skinners' Company—Vintners' Company—Swan-upping and the Dyers' Company—The Salt-cellar of the Innholders' Company—Silver cradle—Colchester Oyster Feast—Huntingdon and the ox's skull—Preston Guild—York and Mayoress' chain—Freemasons.

THE City of London is still the home of many remarkable old customs, in spite of modern innovations; and the ancient constitution of the City, with all its time-honoured institutions, has not yet fallen a prey to Progressist ideas, nor been absorbed by the London County Council. The old Livery Companies of London are some of the most ancient and honoured of our English institutions; they recall to our minds the past glories of our civic life, and retain some of the old manners and customs of our forefathers, which otherwise must inevitably have been lost.

The Lord Mayor's Show is a familiar

sight to Londoners, the sole survival of the old pageants which delighted our forefathers when England's heart was young. The Lord Mayor still rides in his chariot of state, and a few of the Companies send pageants—cars elaborately decorated, and made to represent the particular craft with which the Company is associated. Masses of fruit and flowers adorn the car of the Fruiterers' Company. A band of neatly-dressed maidens show the skill of the Framework Knitters. But these are only the relics of the grand spectacles that once graced the streets of the City on great occasions, when a king returned from a victorious campaign, or a queen was welcomed by the loyal citizens. Resplendent with gowns and hoods of divers hues, well-mounted and gorgeously horsed, with rich colours and great chains, the civic dignitaries, attended by the Companies, used to march in procession through the streets to attend the services at St. Paul's Cathedral, and then entertained in their festal halls nobles and princes, and the mighty "baron" made the table groan, and frumenty, with venison, brawn, fat swan, boar, conger, sea-hog, and other delicacies, crowned the feast. A description of two of the pageants of the Mercers' Company will serve as examples of the nature of the shows which were formerly in vogue. One pageant was a rock of coral

with seaweeds, with Neptune mounted on a dolphin at the summit on a throne of mother-of-pearl, and accompanied by tritons, mermaids, and other marine attendants. Another pageant was a triumphal chariot adorned with a variety of paintings, enriched with gold and silver and rare jewels, and figures bearing the banners of kings and mayors and of the Companies, with the arms of the founder, Richard II. A Virgin (the arms of the Company) sat upon a high throne, dressed in a robe of white satin, decked with gold and gems; her long dishevelled flaxen hair was adorned with pearls and gems, and crowned with a rich coronet of gold and jewels. Her buskins were of gold, laced with scarlet ribbons, and she bore a sceptre and a shield with the arms of the Mercers. Her attendants were Fame blowing her trumpet, Vigilance, Wisdom, and other personified virtues, and the nine Muses, while eight pages of honour walked on foot, and Triumph acted as charioteer. Nine white Flanders horses drew the huge machine, each horse being mounted by some emblematical figure, such as Asia, America, Victory, &c. Grooms and Roman lictors in crimson garb, and twenty savages or "green men," throwing squibs and fireworks, completed the pageant. On the river, too, the scene was equally animated, for there the state barges, echoing with flutes and trumpets,

adorned with streamers and banners, passed along; and one barge, called the Bachelors' Barge, "garnished and apparelled passing all other, wherein was ordeyned a great red dragon spowting flames of fyer into the Thames; and many other gentlemanlie pageants, well and curiously devised, to do Her Highness sport and pleasure therein."

Such were the pageants of ancient days, somewhat different from the less magnificent displays which the utilitarian spirit of the age grudgingly sanctions. It is satisfactory at least that the Lord Mayor's show, the sole relic of the old City "ridings," has not quite passed away; indeed, the last show was more magnificent than usual, and the crowds that assemble to witness the pageants as they pass show that the English people have not yet lost their ancient love of the pleasure which a spectacle affords, and are still amused by the sights and sounds which delighted our forefathers in ancient days.

In the City Companies' Halls, where the great banquets take place, it is the custom to pass round the loving-cup. It is usually a very handsome goblet made of silver. After the dinner and grace, the Master and Wardens drink to their guests a hearty welcome, and as each person drinks, his neighbour on each side stands in order to guard him. The custom originated in the

precaution which was formerly necessary to protect a man from being stabbed while his hands were employed in holding the cup, and to assure him that he was in no fear of treachery, like that practised by Elfrida on King Edward the Martyr at Corfe Castle, who was slain while drinking. The same custom prevails at the Oxford Colleges when the "Gaudies" are being celebrated, and the grace-cup is passed round by the assembled guests.

The City Companies have many ancient customs. The Master and three Wardens of the Girdlers' Company are each crowned on the day of election. After the usual dinner, the beadle carries round the crowns, which are placed by the clerk of the Company on the heads of the officers, and the Master drinks the health of the Company. A little more ceremony is introduced at the election of the Master of the Skinners' Company. The Master's crown is tried on the heads of various members present, and the verdict of the assembly is pronounced that the crown does not fit; until at length it is placed on the head of the Master-elect, and the members at once declare it to be an "excellent fit," and the Master is duly elected. In some companies they have the custom of election by whisper. The renter-warden goes round the room, and each

member whispers into his ear the name of the Master-elect.

The Vintners' Company are accustomed at their dinners to drink the toast of "Prosperity to the Vintners' Company" with five cheers, in memory of the occasion of the visit of five crowned heads to their hall. These were Edward III., King of England, David, King of Scotland, John, King of France, the King of Denmark, and the King of Cyprus, who, with many other nobles and princes, honoured Sir Henry Picard, Master Vintner, by their presence at a splendid feast.

The same Company and the Dyers enjoy the privilege of keeping swans upon the River Thames, and swan-upping is a custom practised every year by the swan herdsman of the Vintners in conjunction with the officers appointed by Her Majesty and the Dyers' Company. The young birds are marked by the swan-markers with the particular marks of their respective owners.

The old custom of dividing different classes of society by means of the salt-cellar is still retained by the Innholders' Company. They possess a very fine salt-cellar of the time of James I., which is applied to the special purpose of dividing the Court and the Livery at the Livery dinners. The latter literally "sit below the salt," as the retainers used to do in the baron's hall.

Municipal customs exist in many of our English towns, several of which we have already recorded. One general custom seems to prevail in municipal corporations of presenting a small silver cradle to the mayor if his wife gives birth to a child during his year of office.

Colchester is famous for its oysters, and also for its Oyster Feast, which has been maintained for well-nigh four centuries. Indeed, this town was remarkable for its numerous dinners, and the lives of its municipal governors must have been extremely jovial. And, moreover, it was all done at the expense of the town. Nearly all the revenues of the place were consumed in eating and drinking, and the chief duty of the corporation was to feast. It would be tedious to enumerate the number of these civic banquets, but conspicuous among them was the feast at the opening and closing of the oyster-dredging. The Municipal Reform Act of 1835 abolished municipal banqueting at the cost of the boroughs, but shortly afterwards the Colchester Oyster Feast was revived, and has ever since been celebrated with much magnificence. The oyster fishery has always been a valuable privilege, which was granted to the town by Richard I. There is a Court of Conservancy specially appointed to preserve the fishery, and try

all offences against the rules of the Court, and once a year they make a proclamation declaring the Colne to be shut, and forbidding all persons from dredging. This is called "Setting the Colne."

The strangest and most remarkable municipal custom is that which prevails at Huntingdon.[1] The whole of the freemen of the borough assemble in the market-place on the morning of September 15th. The skull of an ox, borne on two poles, is placed at the head of a procession composed of the freemen and their sons, a certain number of them bearing spades and sticks. Three cheers having been given, the procession moves out of the town, and proceeds to the nearest point of the borough boundary, where the skull is lowered. The procession then moves along the boundary-line of the borough, the skull being dragged along the line as if it were a plough. The boundary-holes are dug afresh, and a boy thrown into each hole and struck with a spade. At a particular point called Blackstone Leys refreshments are provided, and the boys compete for prizes. The skull is then raised aloft, and the procession returns to the market-place, and then disperses after three more cheers have been given. There are no allusions to this strange custom in any of the topographical books of reference, and

[1] *Antiquary*, 1892.

it is an instance of the strange and curious customs which linger on in the obscure corners of our land.

The old Guild-life of England has almost completely died away, with the exception of the Livery Companies of London to which we have referred. But in one town the Guild exists in all its splendour. Every twenty years at Preston, Lancashire, it revives, and celebrates the occasion with much splendour and magnificence. The charter of the town obliges the corporation so to observe this function, otherwise the inhabitants would lose their franchises and right as burgesses. During a fortnight the town is *en fête*. The following proclamation is issued by the Mayor:—"The Guild Merchant for the Borough of Preston will be opened with the usual solemnities in the Town Hall, on the first Monday after the Feast of the Decollation of St. John the Baptist, when all persons claiming to have any right to freedom or other franchise of the same borough, whether by ancestry, prescription, or purchase, are to appear by themselves or their proxies, to claim and make out their several rights thereto, otherwise they will, according to ancient and immemorial usage, forfeit the same."

A Court is formed consisting of the Mayor, the three Senior Aldermen, who are called

Seneschals or Stewards, four other Aldermen, called Aldermen of the Guild, and the Clerk. Before this Court all who desire to be enrolled as freemen of the Guild have to appear and make good their claim. In olden days this was an important and valuable privilege; otherwise he could not carry on his trade in the town; now it is an honourable distinction. The companies of the trading fraternities assemble early in the morning, and accompanied by the noblemen and gentry of the county they wend their way to the Parish Church. After the service a grand procession is formed, and the companies, decorated with the insignia of their trades, parade the town. First march the tanners, skinners, curriers, and glovers; then follow the weavers and spinners, the cordwainers, carpenters, butchers, vintners, tailors, plasterers, smiths, gardeners, printers, and bookbinders, freemasons, &c. The ladies also take a prominent part in the functions of the Guild, and march in procession, headed by the Mayoress, accompanied by the ladies of the leading county families. Banquets, balls, plays, concerts, follow each other in rapid succession, and during the whole fortnight the town keeps high festival. At the conclusion of the Guild the Masters and Wardens of the Companies attend upon the Guild Mayor in the Guildhall. The Com-

panies have their Guild orders sealed and regularly entered in the books. Proclamation is made, and the name of each inhabitant burgess called over, when the Grand Seneschal, or Town-Clerk, affixes the corporation seal upon the Guild-book, and, holding it in his hand, says, "This is your law." The serjeants then make proclamation: "This Grand Guild Merchants' Court is adjourned for twenty years, until a new Guild Merchants' Court be held and duly proclaimed." Such is the relic of olden times which has come down to us. Every twenty years since 1329 A.D. the festival has been held, except on two occasions—during the Wars of the Roses and the troubles of the Reformation, and it may be confidently expected that in the year 1902 the Preston Guild will again be duly celebrated with accustomed honours, if all good institutions have not quite passed away before that distant date.

An examination of the insignia of office belonging to the ancient corporations of England opens out a wide field for antiquarian investigation, and swords of state, maces, and staffs of office are connected with many old customs. At York the Lady Mayoress has the privilege of wearing a chain as well as her husband, but she has to tolerate the indignity of having it weighed on its delivery to and return by the wearer. This custom

arose from the discovery, made in some period of remote antiquity, that on the return of the emblem of office by a lady mayoress it was found to be short of a few links.

There is one society whose proceedings are replete with ancient customs and time-honoured observances. The Freemasons are accustomed to . . . But that is a sealed book, into which the uninitiated are forbidden to look, and its secrets we may not disclose.

CHAPTER XV

Bell-ringing customs—Dewsbury—Pancake-bell—Bells as guides—Pudding-bell—Harvest-bell—Gleaning-bell—Curfew—Passing-bell—Eight-hours' bell at Geddington, &c.—Calling servants at Fulham Palace—Auction by candle at Aldermaston, Corby, Warton—Market Drayton—Coventry and Lady Godiva—Pack Monday fair—Rockland Guild—Mock mayors—Statute fairs—Gingerbread fairs—Town-crier's call—Relic of feudalism at Dalton-in-Furness—Survival of old charm—Colting at Appleby—Brixton market custom—Raffling for Bibles—Witches' obelisk—Gipsy custom—Ploughing custom.

SEVERAL bell-ringing customs have already been mentioned. At Dewsbury there is the Old Lad's or Devil's Passing-bell, when on Christmas Eve, after the last stroke of twelve o'clock, the age of the year is tolled, as on the death of a person. The old year is tolled out and the new year ushered in with a gladsome peal at Kirton-in-Lindsey, West Houghton, and many other places. We have noticed the "Spur-peal," which is rung in the Northern counties.[1] At Swineshead on

[1] Elsham and Searby may be mentioned as places where the custom prevails.

"Oak Apple Day" a merry peal is rung in memory of King Charles's escape at Boscobel. Pancake-bell may still be heard at several places, notably at Navenby, when it used to be rung by the oldest apprentice in the town. It is also rung at Culworth. Pancake-bell was originally the bell which summoned the people to confession, and not to eat pancakes. At Daventry it is known as "Panburn-bell," and at Maidstone as "Fritter-bell." In Bedfordshire there are several surviving pancake-bells. At St. Paul's, Bedford, the fifth bell is rung at 11 A.M.; at Cranfield, the third bell; at Toddington, the sixth; at Turvey the first and second are chimed together at noon, making a most unmelodious noise, which is supposed to indicate the approach of the gloomy season of Lent. Church-bells were very useful in guiding the people home on dark winter evenings in the days when lands were unenclosed and forests and wild moors abounded. Hence charitable folk sometimes left money to pay the sexton for his labour in ringing at suitable times when the sound of the church-bells might be of service to some belated traveller. At Wokingham, Berks, there was a bequest left for this purpose by Richard Palmer in 1664. At Kirton-in-Lindsey during November and December the custom is still kept up; also at Hessle, near Hull, where a lady who had

lost her way on a dark night, and was guided safely by the bells, left a bequest to the parish clerk on condition that the church-bell should be rung every evening. At Woodstock John Carey left a bequest of ten shillings to be paid for the ringing of a bell for the guidance of travellers. At the conclusion of the morning service on Sundays a peal of bells is sometimes rung. This is sometimes called "Pudding-bell," but was originally intended to announce that there would be another service in the afternoon. This custom prevails at Kirkleatham. The Harvest-bell is rung at the parish church of Driffield at 5 A.M. and 8 P.M. every day during harvest, according to ancient custom. At Culworth the Gleaning-bell is rung during harvest at 8 A.M., and also at the ancient town of Great Wakering, Essex; at Driffield, Yorkshire; at Swalcliffe and Tadmarton, Oxon; Churchdown and Sandhurst, Gloucestershire; Aldeby, Gillingham, and Tibenham, Norfolk; and at Beccles, Suffolk. There are no less than twenty places in Hertfordshire where the gleaning-bell is still rung, and a large number in Leicestershire.

In the same county the curfew is also rung at many places. The curfew may still be heard throughout England, not always at the authorised hour of eight o'clock, but sometimes at seven, and in some places at nine.

Sandwich has just decided that it is better to save eight pounds a year than to preserve an ancient custom at that cost. But it would be rash to say that no one will ever again "hear the far-off curfew sound" over the "wide-watered shore" of East Kent; for it is not the first time that Sandwich has come to this decision. After an unbroken career of 700 years, the Sandwich curfew was threatened with extinction, first about 1833, and again in 1853. But on both occasions public opinion was aroused, and saved the curfew; and who knows that the history of Sandwich may not again repeat itself?

The vitality of the curfew bell is especially remarkable in face of the equal vitality of the legend which seeks to discredit it. We have most of us learned from the history books of our youth how William the Conqueror, the tyrant who destroyed so much good arable land to make the New Forest, invented the "couvre-feu" in order to oppress his conquered subjects. But the New Forest legend has recently been exploded, and the curfew story is almost as false. It is true that when William "introduced" the rule that, at the sounding of the curfew, all fires and lights were to be extinguished, and no person was to stir abroad, he had an eye to the Saxon beer clubs, where he had every reason to anticipate the hatching of treason. But it was

not a new idea of William's own. The curfew was early to be found all over France, Italy, and Spain, and it is said that its ringing at Carfax, in Oxford, was instituted by Alfred the Great. Alfred is also said to have presented Ripon with a horn, which was blown in the streets at the same time as the curfew bell rang; or rather the careful people of Ripon kept Alfred's horn in a safe place, and blew a less distinguished one in the streets. These Alfred stories are probably untrue, but they point to a curfew institution older than the Conqueror.

In 1103 the compulsory curfew was abolished, but it lingered on as a custom almost everywhere, and it is really surprising to find in how many places it still exists, or at any rate was existing at some time during the latter half of the present century. From Penrith, Newcastle, Morpeth, Alnwick, Kirby Stephen, and Durham, in the north, to Winchester, Exeter, Bodmin, and Newport (Isle of Wight) in the south, there is hardly anywhere a district of twenty miles square where the curfew could not be discovered. Eastward its area extends to Cambridge and Bury St. Edmund's, and westward to Newport and Carnarvon, at which latter town it was so cherished that, when the old Guildhall was replaced by a new one, special orders were given for the erection of a suitable

place for the curfew bell. In some counties, such as Cheshire and Oxfordshire, the number of curfew bells recorded as still, or until lately, existing is quite startling. In the Scottish Lowlands, again, it is far from uncommon, and here again there is a tradition which ascribes it to the tyranny of Edward I., though the truth is as doubtful as in the case of the Conqueror. And a rather touching case is that of many American towns, especially in the New England States, which have retained it as a legacy from their Pilgrim founders, who were so unwilling to abandon any of the customs of their home-land. In 1851, at any rate, two bells rang every evening at Charleston, at eight and ten in summer, at seven and nine in winter. At the first the young children said "Good night," and went to bed; at the second the watch for the night was set, and after that no servant might step outside of his master's house without a special permit.

Of course, all these instances are not cases of pure survival. Sometimes the ringing of the curfew bell was retained on account of special bequests for the purpose. That was the case at Kidderminster, where the bell was ordered to be rung on a particular night for one hour. The testator had upon one occasion gone to Bridgenorth Fair, and lost his way upon his return. In his wanderings he

had strayed just to the edge of a very steep descent, and in a moment more he would have been over it, when suddenly Kidderminster curfew rang out, and showed him his direction. In gratitude for what he regarded as his providential escape, he left his bequest to provide for the ringing of the curfew at that hour to all time. In other cases, it is a pure revival due to antiquarian interest, as at Minster in Kent, where the curfew bell proper is supplemented by a treble bell, which rings as many times as there are days so far in the month. This ringing of the day of the month is found at other places, as at Chertsey, Waltham-on-the-Wolds in Leicestershire, Bromyard in Herefordshire, and many more.

But it is contended by some that many of these so-called curfew bells are not curfew bells at all, but the old Catholic Angelus, rung in the early morning, at noon, and in the evening. As we find that at many of the churches which keep up the "curfew" ringing there is also an early morning bell, there may be a good deal in this view. Nuneaton, for instance, joins to its curfew bell a "matins bell," rung at 6 A.M. between Michaelmas and Lady Day, and 5 A.M. between Lady Day and Michaelmas. At Pershore, besides the curfew, which for some curious reason was confined to the time

between November 5 and Candlemas, there used to be a bell at 5 A.M., until on one occasion the sexton made a mistake, and rang the bell some five hours too early. The steady sequence of early morning bells was broken, and perhaps the people of Pershore thought it well to bury a scandal like that in oblivion; at any rate, there was no more 5 A.M. bell. They had omitted to look after their sexton in the careful manner prescribed by the Faversham Articles, where the sexton is directed to "lye in the church steeple" so as to be at his post at the proper time. It was a matter of some consequence in some places where the early morning bell was the signal to rise; and no doubt it was for this latter purpose in many cases that the early bell remained after its religious signification had dropped out of sight. The evening curfew has in the same way served, especially in Scotland, as a signal for the cattle to be driven home.

The Passing-bell is as old as the time of Bede, and, together with the Soul-bell, has already been alluded to. At Culworth three tolls are given for a man, two for a woman. In Somerset and Staffordshire a muffled peal is often rung on Holy Innocents' Day in memory of the slaughter of the earliest Christian martyrs.

At Geddington the "eight-hours' bell"

has for centuries been rung at 4 A.M., at noon, and at 8 P.M. The early bell was intended to call up the horsekeepers and cowmen. A few years ago a slight change was made in the hour. From Plough Monday to Lady Day the first bell was rung at 5 A.M., instead of at 4 A.M., but now, owing to the infirmities of the sexton, it has been discontinued. At Culworth the tenor bell is tolled in case of a fire. The third bell is sounded after a celebration of Holy Communion as the communicants are leaving the church, and a peal is rung at 5 A.M. on the four Mondays in Advent, to remind the listeners that "now it is high time to awake out of sleep."

In Yorkshire every old market-town follows the ancient practice of having a bell rung at early morning and in the evening, though the hours differ. At Kirkham the bell rings during the summer at 5 A.M. and 6 P.M.; in winter, at 6 A.M. and 8 P.M. The evening bell is called the angelic bell. At Crewkerne, Somerset, the curfew is rung at 7 P.M., and the morning bell at 5 A.M. The tenor bell of Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, is always rung from 9 P.M. until 9.15, and a smaller bell is rung at 6 A.M. The former was probably for "compline," the latter for "prime." At Oxford "Great Tom," at Christ Church, tolls a hundred and one

times every night at five minutes past nine o'clock. The number was chosen in accordance with the number of students on the foundation of the College. At Epworth a bell is rung at 6 A.M., 12 noon, and 6 P.M., to call the labourers to work, to dinner, and to rest. A similar custom prevails in the surrounding villages. Certainly the sound of the church-bells is preferable to the steam-whistles of our large factories. The early bell was originally a summons to attend matins.

A quaint practice exists at the Bishop of London's Palace at Fulham, and this consists in what appears to be a time-honoured custom of waking up the episcopal domestics by means of a long pole. At Fulham the Palace lodge-keeper has a regular morning duty to perform in knocking up certain of the servants at successive hours, beginning at about half-past five. The pole he uses is not employed, however, like the old church "rousing-staves," which came in handy in churches in the case of inattentive or dozing members of the congregation to bring them to a proper sense of their position. The venerable man is provided with a slender rod some 15 feet in length, and with this he raps on the antique casements of the servants' bedrooms in the quadrangle within the massive wooden gates of the large western archway,

and he continues his attention until the sleeper gives a more or less grateful answer.

At Aldermaston, Berks, the curious custom prevails of letting land by means of a lighted candle. The villagers assemble in the schoolroom on the occasion of the letting of the "Church Acre," a piece of meadow land which was bequeathed some centuries ago to the vicar and churchwardens of the parish for the expenses of the church. The custom of letting the land is as follows:—A candle is lighted, and one inch below the flame is duly measured off, at which point a pin is inserted. The bidding then commences, and continues till the inch of candle is consumed and the pin drops out. Every three years this ancient ceremony is performed, and it is a relic of the custom of selling by candle which was once prevalent in England. Pepys refers in his Diary to this in the following extract (September 3, 1662):—"After dinner we met and sold the Waymouth, Succesee, and Fellowship hulks, when pleasant to see how backward men are at first to bid; and yet, when the candle is going out, how they bawl and dispute afterwards who bid the most first. And here I observed one man cunninger than the rest, that was sure to bid the last man, and to carry it; and inquiring the reason, he told me that just as the flame goes out the smoke descends,

which is a thing I never observed before; and by that he do know the instant when to bid last."

Aldermaston is not the only village where this old custom exists. At Tatworth, near Chard, a sale by lighted candle takes place every year, and at Chedzoy the "Church Acre" is let every twenty-one years by this means. The land belonging to the parish charities in the village of Corby, near Kettering, is let every eight years by the sale of candle, and the procedure is similar to that which has already been described. Also in Warwickshire, where old customs die hard, the grazing rights upon the roadside and on the common lands at Warton, near Polesworth, have been annually let by the same means. This custom has been observed since the time of George III., when an old Act of Parliament was passed directing that the herbage should be sold by candle-light, and that the last bidder when the flame had burned itself out should be the purchaser. The surveyor presides at the auction, and produces an old book containing the record of the annual lettings since the year 1815. An ordinary candle is then cut into five equal portions, about half-an-inch high, one for each lot. At the last auction the surveyor drew attention to the fact that the sporting rights over an old gravel-pit were

included in Lot 1, but regretted to say that there were no fish in the pond. "Get on, gentlemen, please; the light's burning," was a frequent exhortation. The sales in former years used sometimes to be attended by much disturbance, but recently the utmost decorum has characterised the proceedings.

Fairs have degenerated during recent years, and are very different from the great assemblies of merchants and pedlars, monks, knights, and squires, who flocked to Stourbridge or Southwark in former times. Some are still held under the warrant of ancient charters granted by the sovereigns of England to favoured bishops or burgesses. At Market Drayton there are several fairs held by right of ancient charter. One great one, called the "Dirty Fair," is held about six weeks before Christmas, and another is called the "Gorby Market," at which farm-servants are hired. These are proclaimed according to ancient usage by the ringing of the church-bell, and the court-leet procession marches through the town, headed by the host of the "Corbet Arms," representing the lord of the manor, dressed in red and black robes, and the rest of the court carrying silver-headed staves and pikes, one of which is mounted by a large elephant and castle. At the court several officers are appointed, such as the ale-conner, scavengers, and others. The old standard

measures, made of beautiful bell-metal, are produced, and a shrew's bridle, and then there is a dinner and a torchlight procession.

Coventry Fair, in ancient times one of the largest in England, is remarkable for the procession of Lady Godiva. The lady still "rides forth clothed on with chastity," but the garb of a modern burlesque actress seems scarcely in keeping with the close observance of ancient custom.

Pack Monday Fair is still held at Sherborne, Dorset, on the first Monday and Tuesday after October 10th. It was formerly ushered in by the ringing of the tenor bell in the church; but thirty or forty years ago the bell was cracked, and its voice is no longer heard. On the eve of the fair a crowd of boys go about the streets after midnight blowing cow horns and beating tin trays, making night hideous. "However hideous, many would regret to see the old custom abolished," writes the vicar of Sherborne. The traditional origin of the custom is that when the builders and workmen had finished the church, they packed up their tools (hence Pack Monday), and held a fair in the churchyard, blowing cows' horns in their rejoicing.

A curious country fair is held in the parish of Rockland, Norfolk, on May 16th, which is known as the "Guild," locally called the "Guile." Anciently village guilds were uni-

versal, and this is evidently a degenerate relic of the Guild of St. John the Baptist held in St. Peter's Church before the Reformation. A Mayor of the Guild is elected, usually some half-witted fellow or sot. Having been made drunk, he is clothed fantastically, chaired, and carried through the parish.

"Mock Mayors" were until recent years quite an institution in several towns. He exists in Newbury, Berks, in a part of the town called "the city." Why this not very aristocratic portion of the borough is so called is not quite evident. The historian of Newbury, Mr. Walter Money, thinks that it is connected with the limits of the fair granted by King John (1215 A.D.) to the Hospital of St. Bartholomew. The profits of the fair, which is opened by the town-clerk with all the quaint and ancient formality, still are given to the brethren and sisters of King John's Almshouses attached to the hospital. From time out of mind it has been the custom to elect annually with burlesque formalities a "Mayor of the City." For the last few years no fresh election has taken place, but the custom is not thought to be dead by the "citizens," but only in a state of suspended animation. His correct title is "Mayor of Barthlemas." St. Anne's Day, July 26th, was formerly the day of the election, but it has recently been changed to

November 9th, in compliment perhaps to the mayor of another city somewhat greater than that of Newbury. A "Justice" is also chosen, and after the official banquet, at which beans and bacon formed the principal dish, a procession was formed, accompanied by a band of music, the town officials carrying in lieu of a mace a cabbage on a stick and other emblems of civic dignity. This procession has now been discontinued. "Mock Mayors" used to exist at Aldershot and Farnham.

A fair which is known by the designation "Onion Fair" is still held at Chertsey, Surrey, on September 25, Holy Rood Day (old style). It is so called from a number of onions which are displayed for sale at the fair.

Statute fairs are held in Lincolnshire and some other counties for the purpose of hiring servants. In Yorkshire and Derbyshire they used to be very common, and were accompanied by much dissipation. The servants used to stand in rows, the males together and the females together, and masters and mistresses walked down the lines and selected those whom they considered suitable. The custom seemed to savour of slave-dealing, and the mingling of so many youths and maidens in a strange town without guardianship was not conducive to good morals. Stratford-on-Avon mop, or ancient

statute, fair takes place annually in October, several thousand persons being present from all parts. While other statute fairs have declined, and several become extinct, that at Stratford-on-Avon has increased to an enormous extent, and is said to be the largest in England. Five oxen and ten porkers were on the last occasion roasted in front of large fireplaces constructed in the middle of the streets, and there were the usual holiday attractions. The men in Cumberland who desired to be hired stood in the fair with a straw in their mouth, according to the old dialect poem:—

"Suin at Carel (Carlisle) I stuid wid a strae i' my mooth,
An' they tuik me, nae doubt, for a promisin' youth."

Statute fairs are fast dying out, and none but the commoner sort of servants now present themselves for engagements after this fashion.

Two gingerbread fairs survived in Birmingham until a few years ago, originally granted in 1251 to William de Bermingham by Henry III., to be held at Whitsuntide and Michaelmas. Long lines of market-stalls, loaded with various sorts of gingerbread, clustered round St. Martin's Church, and attracted crowds of buyers. No gingerbread was on sale at any other times.

The town-crier still rings his bell and calls out, "O yes, O yes," before proclaiming the object which he is commissioned to announce. This is, of course, a corruption of the old Norman word *oyez*, and signifies "Hear ye."

As a relic of feudalism we may quote the following, which, according to ancient custom, is read on every 24th day of October at the market-cross at Dalton-in-Furness in the presence of a few javelin-men:—"Thomas Woodburn, steward unto the most noble the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, lord of the late dissolved monastery and manor of Furness and liberty of the same, strictly chargeth and commandeth all manner of persons repairing to the fair, of what estate or degree soever he or they may be, that they and every of them keep the Queen's Majesty's peace, every knight upon payment of £10, every esquire and gentleman upon pain of £5, and every other person upon pain of 40s. And that no person or persons have or bear any habiliment of war, steel coats, bills, or battle-axes, but such as are appointed to attend upon the said steward during the present fair. And that none do buy or sell any wares but by such yards and wands as are, or shall be, delivered unto them by the bailiff of the town of Dalton. And the fair to last three days, whereof this

is the second; and if any wrong be done or offered to any person or persons, he or they may repair to the said steward to have justice ministered unto them according to law. God save the Queen and the lord of this fair." Subsequently a meeting is held at the castle, and the juries are appointed for various purposes, and amongst them two gentlemen are selected as "ale-tasters." They are bound to visit all the public-houses in Dalton and taste the ale; their omission of any house being met with a fine. They make a report, and those having the best ale are awarded a red ribbon, the second best obtaining a blue ribbon. During the fair red and blue ribbon ale are in great demand. It is said that this custom dates from the time when the Abbot of Furness was supplied with ale fron Dalton, and this was regularly tasted by specially appointed ale-tasters.

During the present year, when the writer was inspecting a village-school in Berkshire, he met with the following old charm, which was recited by one of the children as his usual form of daily prayer:—

"Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
Bless the bed that I lie on:
Four corners to my bed,
Four angels round me spread,

One to sing, and one to pray,
And two to carry my soul away:
So if I die before I wake,
I pray to God my soul to take,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour's sake."

These words are very ancient, and probably date from a period long anterior to the Reformation. A somewhat similar charm is known in France, and used by the people in Poitou. It commences:—

"Saint Luc, Saint Marc, et Saint Mathieu,
Evangélistes du bon Dieu,
Gardez les quatre coins de mon lit,
Pendant toute cette nuit.—Ainsi soit-il."[1]

Dr. Lee writes that more than a dozen different, and sometimes very obscure and rugged, forms of this prayer were current in the county of Bucks, and that a horn-book with one rude version was found in one of the churches there.

Old-time punishments, with their various forms of barbarity, are happily things of the past. The pillory, stocks, scold's bridle, and ducking-stool are usually seen in local museums; but it appears that some relics of a form of pillory remain. A few years ago the old-fashioned custom of "colting" was revived at Appleby,[2] when the proprietor of

[1] *La Revue des Traditions Populaires*, November 1889.
[2] *Westmorland Gazette*, June 18, 1887.

an entire horse incurred the displeasure of the inhabitants by declining to pay the accustomed charges. He was therefore duly haltered, and kept in durance for a couple of hours at one of the ancient hostelries of the town, where for the time he figured as "the observed of all observers," and formed a fund of amusement for the many country-folks attending the market.

The curious custom of wiping the shoes of a person who visits a market for the first time is observed at Brixham, where a few years ago the late Prince Henry of Battenberg, when watching the sale of some smoked fish, had his shoes wiped by a fishwoman with her apron. He was then required to "pay his footing." The same custom prevails in the cornfields and hop-gardens of Kent, where the women, after wiping the visitor's shoes with a wisp of straw, a hop-bind, or an apron, require him to pay his footing. If a gentleman refuses to comply with the custom, he is seized by the enraged Amazons and deposited in a hop-basket, where he is left to meditate upon the iniquity of some old-established usages and the unwisdom of refusing to comply with them.

Raffling for Bibles continues still in the parish church of St. Ives, Huntingdonshire. In the year 1675 Dr. Wilde bequeathed the sum of £50 for the purpose of providing

Bibles for poor children, to be raffled for in church. A piece of land, still called "Bible-orchard," was purchased with the money, with the rent of which the books are bought, and a small sum paid to the vicar for preaching a special sermon. The vicar directs the proceedings, and twelve children cast dice for the six Bibles awarded. We believe that owing to the action of the Charity Commissioners a similar custom in a London church has just been discontinued.

Belief in witchcraft and in the power of the evil-eye is not yet dead in England, and numerous instances might be given of strange credulity and lingering superstitions which School Boards and modern enlightenment have not yet eradicated. But charms and omens and popular superstition belong to the study of folk-lore, and can scarcely be classed with existing customs. We may mention, however, the Witch's Obelisk in Delaval Avenue, Northumberland, round which boys are accustomed to run in the hope of "raising the witch." It is believed that if any one succeeds in running round the obelisk seven times without drawing breath, the witch will appear. But as the seven circles mean a distance of a hundred yards, her chances of being disturbed are somewhat remote.

A curious gipsy custom is worthy of record. When a gipsy dies, it appears that

his effects should be burnt; at least such was the custom performed at Withernsea on 12th September 1894. A member of the party of gipsies known as Fiddler Jack died amidst much lamentation of his comrades. After their return from the funeral they proceeded to burn his effects. Waggon, clothes, bedding, a set of china and his fiddle, were all consumed in the flames. This strange custom, which is of great antiquity, is said to have originated in order to prevent quarrelling among the relatives, and also that the widow might not be wooed for the property she might possess. It is also stated that the widow must, for a period of three months, depend entirely upon herself for sustenance, and in no way participate in any of the earnings of her relatives. The same custom of burning the effects of defunct gipsies was observed in the case of the dead queen of a gipsy band encamped near Elizabeth, N.J. All her belongings were burnt in June 1884, which included silk and satin dresses, jewellery, lace, a waggon, and other possessions which were valued at 2500 dollars.

A very pleasing custom exists in some places, showing a true kindly disposition and that good-nature which usually characterises country-folk in their dealings with each other. When a farmer takes a new farm

on lease, his neighbours give him the compliment of a day's ploughing. Seventy or a hundred ploughmen would appear on a certain day, and turn over the stubble for the new tenant. This was done recently at Mouldshaugh, Felton, and at Bartlehill and Kingsrigg. This is probably a revival, and not a survival of primitive usages.

CHAPTER XVI

Court customs — Epiphany customs — Maundy custom — Coronation customs — Royal births — Royal funerals.

THE ceremonial of courts still preserves many interesting and ancient customs, some of which date back to remote antiquity. In memory of the Magi's offering, on the Feast of the Epiphany in the Chapel Royal, St. James's, the monarch of England presents at the altar the customary gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. For many centuries this was done by the sovereign himself, George III. being the last king who appeared in person; now the offerings are presented by two officers of the Lord Chamberlain attended by the yeomen of the guard or "beefeaters." While the offertory sentences are being read, the representatives of royalty bring up three purses and lay them on the alms-dish held by the celebrant, who presents them on the altar. Formerly the purses contained gold in the leaf, frankincense and myrrh, which were deposited in a round box covered with silk. The box

is no longer used, and instead of the gold leaf there are thirty pounds in gold, which are given to the poor of the parish. This is an interesting survival of a very ancient custom.

In memory of the lowly act of the Saviour of mankind in stooping to wash the feet of the disciples at the Last Supper, on Maundy Thursday the sovereigns of England used to wash the feet of several poor people with much solemn pomp and religious observance. Although the actual washing has been discontinued, some portion of the custom is still observed. A special service is held in Westminster Abbey.[1] A procession is formed in the nave, consisting of the Lord High Almoner, representing Her Majesty, attended by his officials, the yeomen of the guard, and the clergy of the Abbey. During the course of the service two distributions of alms are made to a company of old men and women, the number of each sex corresponding to the age of the sovereign. The first distribution in lieu of clothing consists of 35s. to each woman and 45s. to each man. The second distribution is of red and white purses, the red containing £1, and £1, 10s. in gold,

[1] The service was formerly held in the Chapel Royal, Whitehall; since the abolition of that chapel it has been held at Westminster.

an allowance in lieu of provisions formerly given in kind. The white purses contain as many pence as Her Majesty is years of age, the amount being furnished in silver pennies, twopences, threepences, and fourpences. These purses are carried in baskets on the heads of the beefeaters in procession, and then distributed by the Lord High Almoner. Some of the officials wear white scarves in memory of the linen towel with which our Lord girded Himself when He stooped to perform His lowly act of washing His followers' feet. The minor bounty and royal gate alms are distributed at the Royal Almonry to upwards of a thousand aged, disabled, and meritorious people.

In Vienna the same ceremony is performed with much elaborate detail. It is known as the *Fusswaschung*, or the washing the feet of twelve poor men by the Emperor. This takes place in full state at the Imperial Palace on Maundy Thursday. "Apart from its religious aspect, the ceremony is of most imposing interest. At ten o'clock the doors leading into the hall were opened to admit a most remarkable procession. Twelve old men, bent and worn, the youngest of whom was 89 and the oldest 96, tottered into the hall, supported and guided each by two relatives (mostly women), who assisted the poor old creatures to mount the one step

leading to the daïs, and conducted them to their allotted seats. It was almost pathetic to watch the old men glancing timidly at the brilliant throng of officers facing them. The next act in this remarkable spectacle was the entry of some twenty Knights of the Teutonic Order of 'Deutsche Herren,' headed by their Master, the Archduke Eugen. Each was attired in white, with a long black cross woven on the breast of the doublet, and another black cross on the white cloak hanging down from the shoulders. These Crusaders having lined the middle of the hall, made way for the Ministers and the Emperor's general staff. Then followed the Primate of Austria, with priests and acolytes bearing incense and candles, and lastly the Emperor Francis Joseph. The Emperor, who wore the white tunic of an Austrian general, walked to the table where the old men remained seated, and addressed a few words to them. Twelve guardsmen advanced through the hall, each bearing a tray on which was piled the first course of a sumptuous repast. The Emperor, giving his helmet to an officer, himself unloaded each tray as he passed down the line of guards, and with the deftness of a practised waiter arranged the dishes of cold viands before each of his guests. When this task was accomplished, the guards formed up

again with the empty trays, and twelve Archdukes advanced to the table and removed the untouched dishes from before the eyes of the old men. Eventually the tables were removed to make room for the *Fusswaschung*. The slippers which encased the old men's feet were taken off, and a priest came forward bearing a golden basin filled with water and a towel. The Emperor then knelt down before the oldest of his guests, applying the moistened towel to his feet, and, still kneeling, passed on to the next in order and down the whole line till all had been ministered to. It was a strange sight, and one never to be forgotten, that of the ruler of a mighty empire on his knees before the humblest of his subjects, and surrounded by all the pomp and circumstance of a brilliant court. The last act of the ceremony was the placing round the neck of each old man by the Emperor of a chain, to which was attached a small white bag containing thirty pieces of silver."

In former times it was not sovereigns only who observed this custom. Cardinal Wolsey in 1530 made his Maund in Our Lady's Chapel, having first washed the feet of fifty-nine poor men; and the Earl of Northumberland gave gifts of clothing to as many poor men as he was years of age, as well as a platter with meat, an ashen cup filled

with wine, and a purse containing as many pennies as he was years old.[1]

Court customs in connection with the coronation of the sovereign were formerly numerous and remarkable. How many will be retained when our beloved Queen shall have passed away and her successor comes to the throne, it is impossible to foretell. Her loyal subjects trust that that day may be long deferred; but when our future sovereign is crowned, it is to be hoped that at least all the accustomed ceremonies will be observed which graced the coronation of Queen Victoria. Some of them we will now enumerate.

The form of words used in the summons addressed to the peers of the realm ordering them to attend the coronation is worthy of record. "Right trusty and right entirely beloved cousin, we greet you well, and command you to appear, &c. . . . all excuses set apart." Each rank of nobility has its own title of greeting, such as "cousins and councillors;" the barons are "councillors" but not cousins. Recollections of the ancient days of chivalry are revived by the words of homage which the spiritual peers are required to use:—"I, Bishop of ——, will be faithful and true, and faith and truth will bear unto you, our Sovereign Lady and Queen, and

[1] Cf. *Notes and Queries*, 7th Series, xi., June 6, 1891.

your heirs, kings and queens of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland; and I will and do acknowledge the service of the lands which I hold of you as in right of the Church." The peers show their homage by kissing the hand of the sovereign, touching the crown, and repeating the words:—"I, of ——, do become your liegeman of life and limb, and of earthly worship; and faith and truth I will bear unto you, to live and die against all manner of folks. So help me God."

By hereditary right many persons have special dignities and duties at the coronation of a sovereign, and a special Court of Claims is appointed to investigate these ancient rights and privileges.

The Duke of Norfolk is entitled to hold the honoured office of Earl Marshal, which allows him the attendance of an escort of cavalry in all state functions. His privilege as lord of the manor of Worksop is to present a glove and support the sovereign's arm when holding the sceptre, and also to hold the office of chief butler, which entitles him to receive a cup of pure gold. The Duke of Newcastle, we believe, now holds the manor of Worksop, and would therefore be entitled to support the sovereign's arm at the next coronation.

The Lord Mayor of London claims to

present a gold cup of wine to the sovereign, which he is empowered to keep, and also the Mayor of Oxford receives a similar gift.

The Dean and Chapter of Westminster claim the right to instruct the sovereign in the ceremonial duties, and have charge of the regalia. The huge stage-coach is used on these occasions. Special robes of state are preserved in St. James's Palace under the charge of the keeper of the robes, and are worn by the sovereign at the coronation.

The ceremony of enthroning is called "lifting to the throne," derived from the manner of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, who, when their king was enthroned, lifted him from the ground. There are several royal crowns among the regalia in the Tower of London, but at the last coronation only one, the Imperial crown, was used and placed upon the head of the sovereign. The royal sceptre is placed in the right hand, and the rod of equity, adorned with a dove, is held in the left hand of the enthroned monarch. The sword of state[1] is placed on the altar and redeemed for one hundred shillings. This is carried before the sovereign on all state functions. The orb, the ancient ensign of the Roman emperors, surmounted

[1] In addition to this sword there are three other swords of state—that of spiritual justice, that of temporal justice, and the pointless sword of mercy or *curtana*.

by a cross, is delivered with these words: "As is this orb set under the cross, so the whole world is subject to the power and empire of Christ our Lord." An ancient relic made of gold, St. Edward's staff, which is said to contain a portion of the true cross, is carried in the procession. The most solemn function of all is the anointing, during which ceremony four Knights of the Garter hold a canopy over the sovereign, while the Archbishop pours the anointing oil with a spoon, which is the most ancient of all the regalia, and with which many monarchs have been anointed. A ruby ring is placed on the sovereign's fourth finger of the right hand, signifying that the monarch is thus wedded to the nation. Certain offerings are made, among which are an ingot of gold and an altar pall "composed of ten yards of gold barred, gold frosted flowered brocade, lined with rich sarsenet, and with deep gold fringe."

The oaken chair on which the sovereign is seated has been in use since the time of Edward II., and beneath it is the Coronation Stone which was conveyed to Westminster from Scotland by Edward I.; a wild legend declares it to be the stone on which Jacob laid his head when he slept at Bethel. Amongst the curious claims of service may be mentioned that of the Barons of the Cinque Ports to hold a canopy over the sovereign; the Baron

Grey de Ruthyn to carry the great spurs; the Duke of Athol to present a cast of falcons; the Archbishop of Canterbury, in right of holding the manor of Addington, to make a mess of pottage called Dillegrout. But the strangest survival of all is the claim of the Dymoke family to the office of King's Champion. His duty is to appear on horseback in full armour at the royal banquet after the coronation, accompanied by the Earl Marshal and the Lord High Constable. The champion then makes the following challenge:— "If any person, of what degree soever, high or low, shall deny or gainsay our Sovereign Lord . . . to be rightful heir to the Imperial crown of the United Kingdom, or that he ought not to enjoy the same, here is his champion, who saith he lieth sore and is a false traitor, being ready in person to combat with him." The champion then, after the ancient manner, throws down his gauntlet. The challenge not being accepted, the sovereign drinks the health of the champion in a silver cup, which is presented to the brave defender of English monarchy, who then backs his horse out of the hall. It is impossible to say how many of these old customs will be retained at the next coronation, but it may be allowed to a lover of ancient ceremonial to hope that old forms and rites consecrated by time will not be abandoned.

At the birth of a member of the royal family it is customary for the Lord Mayor of London, the City authorities, and the chief officers of state to attend to testify to the actuality of the event. The partaking of caudle at the palace by all distinguished visitors is also an ancient custom, which was practised when the Prince of Wales was born.

It is but a step from the cradle to the grave, and royal funerals are celebrated with some strange customs. They used to be performed at night, while the torches of the soldiers shed a weird light around. The titles of the royal dead are recited by the Garter King-at-Arms, and the officers of the household break their rods of office, and lay them on the coffin before it is lowered to its last resting-place. However, we believe that these ceremonies have not been performed on the occasion of recent royal funerals; nor has the caudle-cup been used in the palace since the birth of the present heir-apparent.

CHAPTER XVII

Parliamentary customs—Searching the House—Introducing new member—Hat ceremony—"Who goes home?"—Royal assent to Bills—Ceremony of opening Parliament—Installation of Speaker—Introduction of new Peers in House of Lords—Woolsack.

THE House of Commons is usually supposed to be the most modernised of all institutions, and flatters itself upon being a very "up-to-date" assembly. Still many quaint and curious customs linger which are worthy of record.

On the morning that Parliament is to begin business, and at half-past ten, there assemble in the Prince's Chamber of the Palace of Westminster a military officer, four marshalmen, and ten "beefeaters" or yeomen of the guard. These last, with their quaint Tudor costume, are familiar to every visitor to the Tower of London. The marshalmen, with their frock-coats and tall hats (of the pattern Leech has immortalised in his various pictures of the metropolitan police), are known only to those who have admission by the peers' entrance to the House of Lords, inside

which two of them stand during each sitting, or who attend state functions at Buckingham and St. James's Palaces, whereat they likewise do duty. With this band of fifteen are joined the resident engineer of the palace of Westminster, the chief inspector of the parliamentary police, and the attendants upon the House of Lords; and, after a lantern has been served to each, there comes to them the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, or, as is now more usual, the Yeoman Usher, with the secretary to the Lord High Chamberlain, the high official who has charge of this royal palace. "Prepare for a search," is the order given by the Lord Chamberlain's secretary; and, in full remembrance that it was under the peers' chamber that Guy Fawkes was found, but utterly ignoring the electric light which is now ablaze throughout the building, the procession moves from the Prince's Chamber to the House of Lords. With their lanterns dimly burning, the beefeaters scan each corner and peer under every bench, the chief inspector looking on meanwhile with the serene satisfaction of knowing that the men under his orders have kept the place secure from explosive intrusion. From the House of Lords the procession wends its way through the central hall to the House of Commons, and then, by way of the steps at the back of the chair, to the first floor,

and next to the basement. Room after room in the most intricately arranged building ever devised is there searched until those beneath the House of Lords have been dealt with; and then, with a parting inspection of the huge Victoria Tower, the marshalmen and beefeaters find their way once more into the courtyard, and there disperse.

The Members' lobby and the central hall alike grow filled as two o'clock approaches, for that is always the hour fixed for the opening ceremony. Greetings are cordially exchanged between those who have not met for months; the resemblance of the scene to a school reassembling after the holidays strikes as a fresh inspiration every journalist who happens to be present for the first time; and the roar of cheery voices rises higher and higher until, a few minutes before two, the deep voice of a constable is heard from the library corridor to exclaim "Speaker!" with the second syllable indefinitely prolonged. Then a hush falls upon all, and, at the police direction, "Hats off, strangers," each visitor to the lobby (including the constables themselves, and virtually every member) doffs his headgear as, preceded by the sergeant-at-arms bearing the mace, and followed by his chaplain and his private secretary, the Speaker, in full wig and robes, and with cocked-hat in

hand, sweeps by through the lobby into the House.

When a new member is admitted, he is escorted to the table by two members. This immemorial custom originated in a distant past, when it was necessary to avoid personation. This precaution is, of course, now entirely unnecessary, but the custom still remains.

The use of the hat is an important feature of parliamentary observance and ceremonial, and a breach of custom is always hailed with loud cries of "Order, order." Contrary to the manners of ordinary individuals, members of Parliament are required to put on their hat when seated in the House, and to take it off when they rise up to speak or to leave the assembly. When a member retires from parliamentary life, he is called upon to accept the nominal office of the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds. The ceremony at the close of each sitting reminds one of the dark lanes and dangerous corners of Old London, when the journey homewards was attended with some difficulty and danger. The moment the House adjourns its sittings, the messengers and policemen shout "Who goes home?" For centuries this cry has been heard, and recalls the time when the members were obliged to go home in parties because of the footpads who infested the London

streets, and who were not much alarmed by the presence of the City watchmen. The question is still heard, but no one answers.

There are few things more impressive or instructive in their way than the manner of the clerks in the House of Lords when going through the ceremony of giving the royal assent to Bills. Standing at either side of the table, one clerk reads out the names of the Bills, The other, first bending low to the Royal Commissioners, half turns his head towards the Speaker and the Commons assembled at the Bar, and almost flings at them the phrase, *La Reyne le veult.* Then turning again to the Royal Commissioners, he reverentially bows with implied apology for having held even such slight communication with commoner people. The formula, gone through precisely in the same way a score or a hundred times, according to the number of Bills receiving the assent, becomes in the end exasperatingly comical.

The ceremonial prescribed by ancient usage at the opening of a new Parliament is both picturesque and significant, and the forms of election and installation of the Speaker have most historical impressiveness. Struggles between the Crown and the rights of the people have long since passed away, but the results of long centuries of contest are embodied in the assurance conveyed to the

representative of the Commons by the Lord Chancellor in the words, "That Her Majesty does most readily confirm all the rights and privileges which have ever been granted to the Commons by any of her royal predecessors, and that as regards the Speaker himself, Her Majesty will ever be pleased to place the most favourable construction on his words and actions."

The usual form adopted for the regular installation of the Speaker is worthy of record. The Speaker-elect enters the House of Commons attired in court dress, wearing a barrister's wig, accompanied by the sergeant-at-arms bearing the mace over his shoulder. The mace is then deposited on the table. Then the yeoman-usher of the black rod is announced, who bows and advances to the clerk's table, and requests the attendance of "the Honourable House in the House of Peers." All the members present rise to their feet, and the Speaker-elect descends from the chair, and, preceded by the sergeant-at-arms, carrying the mace in the hollow of his arm, walks to the House of Lords. Here he addresses the Royal Commissioners, and says:—"My Lords, I have to acquaint your Lordships that, in obedience to the royal commands, Her Majesty's faithful Commons, in the exercise of their undoubted rights and privileges,

have proceeded to the election of a Speaker. Their choice has fallen upon myself. I therefore present myself at your Lordships' Bar, and humbly submit myself to Her Majesty's gracious approbation." The Lord Chancellor answers:—"We are commanded to assure you that Her Majesty is so fully sensible of your zeal for the public service, and of your undoubted efficiency to execute the arduous duties which her faithful Commons have selected you to discharge, that she most readily confirms the choice they have made." The Speaker then says:—"I humbly submit myself to Her Majesty's gracious commands, and it is now my duty, in the name and on behalf of the Commons of the United Kingdom, to lay claim, by humble petition to Her Majesty, to all their undoubted rights and privileges, especially to freedom of speech in debate, to freedom from arrest, and, above all, to free access to Her Majesty whenever occasion may require it, and that the most favourable construction may be put upon all their proceedings; and, for myself, I pray that if, in the discharge of my duties, I inadvertently fall into any error, the blame may be imputed to me alone, and not to Her Majesty's faithful Commons." The Lord Chancellor replies:—"Mr. Speaker, we have it further in command to assure you that Her Majesty does most

readily confirm all the rights and privileges which have ever been granted to the Commons by any of her royal predecessors; and that, with respect to yourself, sir, though you do not stand in need of any such assurance, Her Majesty will ever be pleased to place the most favourable construction on your words and actions." The Speaker, having made the customary obeisance to the Royal Commissioners, then withdraws, and announces to the Commons the approval by Her Majesty of the selection of himself as Speaker of the House, and of the granting of the ancient rights and privileges to her faithful Commons which had been granted and conferred by Her Majesty, or by any of her royal predecessors. Thus the important ceremony ends.

The ceremony attending the formal introduction of new peers into the House of Lords is not devoid of interest. They enter the House in procession with their sponsors, all wearing their robes of scarlet and ermine, and being preceded by Garter King-at-Arms and the Duke of Norfolk, Hereditary Earl Marshal, in their official robes. Each presents his patent and writ of summons to the Lord Chancellor, kneeling before the woolsack, and each patent and writ are read by the reading clerk. After taking the oath of allegiance and subscribing the roll,

they are conducted to the seats of their respective ranks, when they salute the Lord Chancellor three times, and are afterwards formally introduced to him.

The origin of the woolsack is said to date from the time of Elizabeth, when an Act of Parliament was passed to prevent the exportation of wool. In order to keep in mind this source of our national wealth, woolsacks were placed in the House of Lords, whereon the judges sit.

CHAPTER XVIII

Curious doles—Plums at Christmas—Dorsetshire custom—Gloves for the parson—Bread and cheese for all—Scrambling charity—Figs and ale—Pork and petticoats—Old love-feasts—Bull-baiting—Poor seamen—Lamps in London—Washing Molly Grime—Predilection for colours—Tombstone charity—Prisoners at Newgate—Redeeming English slaves—Maid-servants—Musical bequest—"Lion Sermon"—Pax Cake—National events—Dancing round John Knill's tomb—Dole at Hospital of St. Cross at Winchester.

IN no other way is the eccentricity of human nature more clearly manifested than in the peculiar methods which men have devised for benefiting mankind. We have already noticed some strange bequests and remarkable charities, and now propose to record others. The Charity Commissioners have in recent years diverted several charities from their original applications, and, in some cases, the wishes of the donor have not always been regarded with punctilious exactness; but the lapse of time and the wants of other generations have necessitated a change in the mode

of application of many charities, and several old customs have therefore been doomed to destruction.

Very numerous are the old charities for providing beef, bread, coals, strong beer, ale, and even tobacco, snuff, plums, and mince-pies. At Forebridge, Staffordshire, the children in ancient times complained that they had no plums for a pudding at Christmas. So the chamberlain of the corporation of Stafford was enabled, by the bounty of some kind individual, to expend an annual sum at Christmas for purchasing plums to be distributed among the inhabitants of certain old houses in the liberty of Forebridge. The Rector of Piddle Hinton, Dorset, according to ancient custom, gives away on old Christmas Day a pound of bread, a pint of ale, and a mince-pie to every poor person in the parish. Nor is the feast of Lent forgotten. John Thake, in 1537, left his property with the condition that a barrel of white herrings and a cade of red herrings be given to the poor of Clavering, Essex; and a similar bequest was made by Richard Stevenson, of Dronfield, Derbyshire, Lord Rich of Felsted, Essex, and David Salter of Farnham Royal, Bucks, who also ordered that two shillings be laid out for the buying of a pair of kid gloves for the parson on the first Sunday in Lent. Bread and cheese was provided for

every person who slept in the parish of Westbere, Kent, three nights previous to the first Saturday after old Midsummer Day; and at Paddington bread and cheese were thrown down and scrambled for by the people assembled in the churchyard. At Witney, Oxon, after the morning service on Sundays, a loaf of bread is given to the poor, and at Easter each person is presented with a sixpence.

Figs and ale were provided for the poor scholars of the Free School in Giggleswick on St. Gregory's Day by the will of William Clapham in 1603, and at Harlington, Middlesex, the ringers received a leg of pork for ringing on November 5th. White peas, rye, oatmeal, malt, barley, appear in other bequests. A small piece of land, called Petticoat Hole, at Stockton, Yorks, is held subject to an ancient custom of providing a petticoat for a poor woman of Stockton. In the same county there is an ancient payment of 3s. 4d. as the value of a pound of pepper, due from the occupier of a farm at Yaptam for taking care of the parson's horse, which he is bound to do whenever the parson goes there to do duty.

The Weavers' Company, London, pay ten shillings a year to the churchwardens of St. Clements, Eastcheap, to provide two turkeys for the parishioners, to be eaten

at their annual feast, called "the reconciling or love feast," formerly held on Maundy Thursday.

To establish bull-baiting seems a curious form of charity; but George Staverton in 1661 gave the sum of £6 yearly to buy a bull to be baited at Wokingham, enjoining that the flesh, hide, and offal was to be sold and bestowed upon poor children in stockings of the Welsh and shoes. The bull was baited until 1823, and since that period has been put to death in a more merciful manner, and the meat given to the poor.

Charities for the benefit of poor distressed soldiers and seamen abound, notably the famous one connected with Bamborough Castle. There is a special bequest, under the control of the minister of St. Mary's, Dover, for the widows of drowned men.

The streets of London in the days of candles and oil-lamps were dark and dangerous. One John Wardall bequeathed to the Grocers' Company a sum for the maintenance of a good and sufficient iron and glass lantern for the direction of passengers to go with more security to and from the waterside all night long, to be fixed at the north-east corner of St. Botolph's Church. John Cooke in 1662 did a like service for the corner of St. Michael's Lane, near Thames Street, and also for the cleaning and sweeping the aisle

of St. Michael's Church, Crooked Lane, London, called Fishmongers' Aisle. We have already noticed several bequests for bell-ringing at night for the guidance and direction of travellers.

The washing of Molly Grime is a curious bequest. Seven old maids of Glentham, Lincolnshire, received for many years until 1832 a small sum for washing a tomb in the parish church, called Molly Grime, with water brought from Newell Well.

Sometimes donors have striven to immortalise their names by showing a whimsical predilection for colours. Thus Henry *Greene* in 1679 bequeathed money to provide four *green* waistcoats for four poor old women, lined with *green* galloon lace; and Thomas *Gray* left money for *grey* waistcoats and coats of the same colour.

Leonard Dare in 1611 ordered the wardens of South Pool, Devonshire, to lay on his tombstone four times a year threescore penny loaves of good and wholesome bread for the poor of the parish. There is a notable charity in the custody of the Vicar of St. Sepulchre's Church, London, for the purpose of causing a bell to be tolled previous to every execution at Newgate, and certain words of exhortation delivered to the condemned prisoners. The prescribed

words are curious, and commence with the rhyme—

> "You prisoners that are within,
> Who for wickedness and sin," &c.

The redeeming of English Christian slaves from captivity is not now a very useful object for the bequests of the charitable. In 1655 Alicia, Duchess Dudley, left money for this purpose, and there is also the famous Belton's charity for the redemption of British slaves in Turkey and Barbary. These charities have now been diverted to other uses.

Very numerous are the bequests for the encouragement of maid-servants, and a not infrequent method of bestowing the charity is as follows:—Two or three candidates are selected and these have to throw dice or cast lots for the amount specified in the bequest. This was the method adopted at Guildford according to the will of John How, made in 1674, and at Reading, where John Kendrick, John Blagrave, and others left money for the benefit of maid-servants. The throwing of dice has, however, now been discontinued.

One widow of Westbury, Wilts, named Elizabeth Townsend, was so impressed with the merits of an anthem composed by her late husband's grandfather, that she left a bequest to the vicar and choir singers for

the singing of it every year on the Sunday preceding the 24th day of June.

The annual "Lion Sermon" at St. Katharine Cree Church, Leadenhall Street, founded by Sir John Gayer, Lord Mayor of London some two and a-half centuries ago, is preached every year in commemoration of an episode in Sir John's life. Sir John Gayer was a merchant venturer, and accompanied an expedition to the East, when, getting separated from the caravan at night, he found himself confronted by lions, prayed the prayer of Daniel for deliverance, and his life was saved. That night was the 16th of October—the date commemorated by this annual sermon. Another notable episode in the life of Sir John Gayer as Lord Mayor was his committal to the Tower, with four Aldermen, for refusing to comply with the demand which Parliament, in 1647, when it no longer represented the nation, made upon the Corporation of London for a subsidy for the troops. That incarceration probably hastened Sir John's death. He died in the good old faith in which he had lived, and left money for the maintenance of the "Lion Sermon," which records his memory and his wonderful deliverance.

The old custom of the "Pax Cake" is still kept up in the united parishes of Sellack and King's Capel, Herefordshire. On Palm

Sunday plain cakes are distributed in church, the intention being that those who have quarrelled should break the cake together, and say "Peace and good will," thus making up their differences in preparation for the Easter Communion. At some period glasses of beer were introduced, and the present vicar remembers seeing the beer handed round in the church; but this part of the ceremony has long been discontinued, and was not originally part of the custom. The cost of the cakes is defrayed by a rent-charge on a farm in the parish. In the same church another custom prevails which may be here noted. At the celebration of Holy Communion the altar rails are always covered with white linen. This is probably the pre-Reformation "Houseling Cloth," which has never been discontinued in this church. At Foy Church, in the same county, a similar custom exists.

Charities have been founded and still exist for the preaching of sermons on the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, to commemorate the preservation of the donors in the Great Fire of London, the victory of Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar, the victories of Wellington, the commemoration of the ascension of George IV., and other national events. And we have bequests for the encouragement of

matrimony and horse-racing, providing portions for poor maids, catechising children, buying Bibles, for repeating the Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed, and Ten Commandments, strewing the church with rushes, to awaken sleepers, and whip dogs out of church, to dress graves with flowers, to plant rose-trees in churchyards, to promote peace and goodwill among neighbours, and to encourage many other desirable and excellent objects. If all these bequests founded by pious benefactors had been successful in securing the attainment of the object for which their charity was bestowed, our nation would have long since become a happy, prosperous, and contented people.

One of the strangest of strange bequests is that of John Knill, who died in 1811, and had a building called Knill's Mausoleum erected near St. Ives. He left sundry bequests of a useful nature, but ordered that every five years five pounds should be divided among the girls, not exceeding ten years of age, who should between ten and twelve o'clock in the forenoon of St. James's Day dance for a quarter of an hour at least on the ground near the Mausoleum, and after the dance sing Psalm C. of the old version to "the fine old tune" to which the same was then sung in St. Ives Church. He provided also white ribbons for breast-knots for the girls,

a cockade for the fiddler, and divers other matters, which reveal painfully the vanity that lurks in human nature. Mr. Knill's will is a long one, and need not be further recorded.

We must not omit to record the old-fashioned pilgrim's dole of bread and ale which is offered to all wayfarers at the Hospital of St. Cross at Winchester. Travellers who partake of this refreshment at the gate of this fine old almshouse may reflect that they are thus enjoying the bounty of William of Wykeham. Emerson once made a pilgrimage to the hospital, claimed and received the victuals, and triumphantly quoted the incident as proof of the majestic stability of English institutions.

CHAPTER XIX

Army customs—Keys at the Tower—12th Lancers and hymn-tunes—Scotch traditions of the 1st Regiment of Foot—Royal Welsh Fusiliers and St. David's Day—Inkerman Day—Royal Berks—Scots' Greys—7th Hussars—8th Hussars—Regimental nicknames—14th Hussars—Coldstream Guards—The Buffs—Northumberland Fusiliers—Suffolk Regiment—Lancastrian Fusiliers—Relics of American War—Royal Canadians—Cheshire Regiment—7th Fusiliers—Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry—Black Watch.

THE army is so conservative an institution that old established customs live long therein. The *esprit de corps* which a soldier feels for his regiment makes him eager to retain the special observances which have been handed down from past ages, and which serve to commemorate some brilliant feat of arms or honourable association connected with the regimental history. A few of these customs are here recorded.

Every night at the Tower of London the warder locks the doors and gates, and then approaches the guard-house. The guard with his assistants turns out at the approach

of the party, and the following curious dialogue takes place:—

Sentry (*challenging*)—"Halt! who goes there?"

Warder (*halting*)—"The keys."

Sentry—"Whose keys?"

Warder—"Queen Victoria's keys."

Sentry—"Pass, Queen Victoria's keys."

The warder and party advance; then he halts and cries aloud, "God save Queen Victoria." The guard present arms, and officers and men say in chorus three times—"Amen, amen, amen."[1] This is a very curious relic of the manners and customs of ancient times.

It is difficult to account for a custom which prevails in the 12th Lancers, in which regiment, at ten o'clock each night outside the officers' quarters, the band plays one or two hymn-tunes. A similar custom was introduced in the 10th Hussars in 1866 by the late Colonel Valentine Baker; and as he exchanged from the 12th Lancers to that regiment, he probably copied the idea from them. In the 10th Hussars to this day the band plays two hymns every evening between the first and second post of watch-setting, followed by "God Save the Queen." A bequest was left for this purpose, and it is an example of the close observance of

[1] "London Letters," by George W. Smalley.

tradition existing in the British army. Other examples are not wanting to enforce the same truth. After mess, or at the close of any function, the band of the Norfolk Regiment is accustomed to play the familiar strains of "Rule Britannia" before the National Anthem. The figure of Britannia is the distinguishing badge of the regiment, and was bestowed upon it by Queen Anne for its distinguished conduct at the battle of Almanza, during the war of the Spanish succession. The regiment thus upheld the honour of Great Britain, and was rewarded for it by Queen Anne allowing them to wear the figure of Britannia on their breastplates. The Royal Berks Regiment also have the same custom. The Wiltshire Regiment greatly distinguished itself at the defence of Carrickfergus Castle in 1760 when the French invaded Ireland. Their bullets being all expended, the men used bricks, stones, and even their coat buttons in lieu thereof, and for this reason are allowed to have a "splash on the buttons."

A body of Scottish infantry proceeded from Scotland to France in the reign of James VI. to assist Henry IV. in his wars with the Leaguers, and was constituted in January 1633 a regiment, afterwards the 1st or Royal Regiment of Foot, now known as the Royal Scots (Lothian Regiment). Many

Scottish traditions are kept up in the regiment, and amongst them the custom of "first-footing." A correspondent in *Folk-Lore*[1] writes that at midnight on New Year's Eve he was startled by the uproar in the neighbouring barracks, the shouts and the beating of drums, while the band played a lively tune as it marched up and down the barrack square. The daughters of the old sergeant with whom the writer lodged brought in cakes and wine and claimed to be "first-foot," and thus the Royals had preserved the old custom which flourished so much in Scotland for more than two centuries and a half.

The Royal Welsh Fusiliers, formerly the 23rd, and the Welsh Regiment (formerly the 41st), patriotically observe St. David's Day, and the wearing of the leek is an important part of the ceremonial. The origin of this peculiar Welsh custom is uncertain. Some say that the practice arose in consequence of a victory obtained by them under Caedwalla over the Saxons on St. David's Day, A.D. 640, when the Welsh adopted the leek as a distinguishing badge. Shakespeare alludes to the custom in his play of Henry V., act iv. scene 7, when Fluellen thus addresses the king:—

[1] The writer speaks of the custom as a recollection, but we doubt not that it is still maintained by the Royals.

"Your grandfather of famous memory, an't please your Majesty, and your great uncle Edward the plack prince of Wales, as I have read in the chronicles, fought a most prave pattle here in France.

"*K. Henry.* They did, Fluellen.

"*Flu.* Your Majesty says very true. If your Majesty is remembered of it, the Welshmen did goot service in a garden where leeks did grow, wearing leeks in their Monmouth caps; which, your Majesty knows, to this hour is an honourable padge of the service; and I do believe your Majesty takes no scorn to wear the leek on Saint Tavy's Day."

This is at least conclusive that the wearing of the leek by Welshmen on St. David's Day was practised in Shakespeare's time, and this custom is still preserved by the Welsh Regiment and the Welsh Fusiliers. All the men in the regiment wear a leek in their busby, and their goat, an important member, is decked with rosettes and red and blue ribbons. At the officers' mess the drum-major, accompanied by the goat, marches round the table after dinner, carrying a plate of leeks. Every officer, or guest, who has never eaten one before, is obliged to do so, standing on his chair with one foot on the table, while the drummer beats a roll behind his chair. He is then considered a true Welshman. All the toasts are coupled with the name of St. David, and the memory of a certain Toby Purcell, major of the regi-

ment, who was killed in the Battle of the Boyne, is duly honoured. This regiment is remarkable in having what is called the flash on the back of the neck of the coats of the officers and staff sergeants. Every regiment wore pig-tails till about the year 1807, and the supposition is that the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, having retained them after other regiments had officially discarded them, were eventually allowed to retain the flash on the coat-collars as a distinction.

Inkerman Day is observed on November 5th, and crowds assemble at St. James's Palace to witness the relieving of the guard. On the last anniversary of this famous victory the 3rd Grenadiers were relieved by the 1st Coldstream, the Queen's colours of both battalions, borne by lieutenants, being decorated with bunches of laurel in memory of their deceased comrades.

The Royal Berks Regiment wear a black band on their arm on the 27th day of July, in remembrance of the slaughter of their comrades of the second battalion at the fatal Battle of Maiwand in the Afghan War. There the gallant soldiers of brave Berkshire were mowed down by their fierce foe, but the regiment nobly maintained their ground. The monument in the Forbury Gardens at Reading was erected in memory of the death of so many heroes.

The 2nd Dragoons, or Royal Scots Greys, wear grenadier caps or bearskins instead of helmets. This custom is by some believed to have originated at the Battle of Ramilies in 1706, but it is far more probable that the regiment wore grenadier caps from the time it was raised.

The 7th (Queen's Own) Hussars was originally a Scotch regiment. Although it has long since severed its connection with Bonnie Scotland, the memory of its original home is kept up by the custom of its band playing "The Garb of Old Gaul" when marching past, and "Hieland Laddie" when trotting.

The 8th (King's Royal Irish) Hussars preserve the memory of the brave deeds of the regiment by a peculiar mode of wearing the sword-belt. The soldiers were permitted to wear the sword-belt over the right shoulder, instead of round the waist, as is usual in dragoon regiments, on account of the gallant conduct of their regiment at the battle of Saragossa when they captured the belts of the Spanish cavalry. The 8th Hussars were nicknamed "Cross-belts" in consequence of this peculiar privilege. The nicknames of the different regiments are full of interest, and often recall the memory of some gallant feat of arms performed in ancient days, though some of the titles are not always complimentary. For example, the 11th Hussars, called Prince

Albert's Own, because they formed the escort of the Prince on his arrival in England, were usually called "The Cherry Pickers," from their wearing cherry-coloured overalls unlike any other cavalry regiment.

The anniversary of the battle of Ramnuggur, fought in 1848, when the regiment of the 14th (King's) Hussars defeated an enormously superior force of the Sikh army, is still observed as a great night, and the regiment is still known as "The Ramnuggur Boys."

The scarlet plume in the busby of the 15th (King's) Hussars is assumed in memory of the battle of Villiers-en-Couché, fought in 1794, when the regiment charged together with the Austrian Hussars, and defeated a very large company of the enemy. After a review in 1799, the king granted the troopers the honour of decking their helmets with scarlet feathers. They well earned the title of "The Fighting Fifteenth."

The Coldstream Guards preserve by their name the memory of the famous march of General Monck from Coldstream in January 1660, to restore King Charles II. to the throne of England.

The Buffs enjoy the time-honoured privilege of marching through the City of London with drums beating and colours flying. The origin of the custom is curious. It

appears that it was first called the Holland Regiment, and was raised in the time of Queen Elizabeth to aid the Dutch in their war with Spain. The regiment was formed in 1572 by the London Guilds, who mustered 3000 men, and it was the peculiar privilege of the trained bands of the city to march through London streets in the manner already described.

The Northumberland Fusiliers are accustomed to wear red and white roses in their caps on St. George's Day. The origin of this custom is doubtless connected with the arms of the regiment, St. George and the Dragon, and the roses emblazoned on their banner. The Fusilier caps were given them for their bravery in defeating the French at Wilhelmstahl in 1762, and a white plume was added for their gallantry at St. Lucia in 1778. The men plucked the white feathers from the hats of the dead Frenchmen and put them in their own headgear.

The Suffolk Regiment wear roses in their caps on August 1st, in commemoration of the battle of Minden, fought in 1759. The Lancashire Fusiliers have a similar custom, which arose from the fact that the regiment was posted near some gardens, from which the men took roses to adorn their hats during the battle.

The East Yorkshire and Loyal North Lancashire Regiments fought in the Ameri-

can War, and in memory of General Wolfe's death wear a black worm in their lace.

The 1st Battalion, Prince of Wales' Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians), was raised in Canada from the colonial population under extraordinary circumstances in 1858, and was designated the 100th, or Prince of Wales's Royal Canadian Regiment. Whilst in that country it took part in the celebration of the Confederation of Canada, known as "Dominion Day," July 1st, 1867, and ever since the anniversary is regularly observed by all ranks of the regiment wearing Canadian maple leaves in their headgear; the regimental colours as well as the officers' mess table being also decorated. These leaves are specially selected and sent from Canada to the regiment wherever it may be serving. Special athletic sports and a ball are held. When practicable the colours are trooped. The regiment, which has for its badge the maple leaf, is the only regiment in the army having a colonial title.[1] Its nicknames are curious, and are as follows:—"The Crusaders," so called by the Canadians from the fact of its having been raised to assist in the suppression of the Mutiny in the East Indies; "The Wild Indians," owing to the

[1] I am indebted to Captain Dickinson for this information; he tells me that the custom has never been recorded before in any other work.

idea that it was recruited from the backwoodsmen of North America; "The Beavers," from its original badge; "The Old Hundredth," on account of its rank and file being much older men than in other regiments, at the time it was first raised; and from its being the "100th Foot" it was named "The Centipedes," which title is said to be the invention of some witty Spaniards when the regiment was stationed at Gibraltar. These distinctive names are preserved by the regiment with much veneration and pride.

The 2nd Battalion of this regiment was originally the 3rd Bombay European Infantry of the East India Company's Forces, and then the 109th (Bombay Infantry) Regiment. It observes with much ceremony April 3rd, known as "Jhansi Day," in remembrance of the storm and siege of Jhansi (Central India) in 1858, when the regiment greatly distinguished itself. A ball takes place, and the colours are hung and decorated with a large laurel wreath. This regiment is called the "Steel" or "Brass Heads," on account of the splendid manner in which they stood the terrible exposure to the sun in their campaign in Central India. Its connection with the old East India Company is preserved by the painting of their old colours on the drums of the battalion in conjunction with the "Queen's Colours."

The Cheshire Regiment wear oak-leaves in their caps on parade. The origin of this custom is unknown. The opinion of some members of the regiment when questioned upon the subject is worthy of record. One speaker stated that no other regiment was allowed to wear the oak leaf, and "that was good enough for him." Another stated that the regiment saved the life of King Charles II. at the battle of *Dettingen*, and stood around the tree in which the King was hidden. A little historical instruction in the army might not be altogether wasted.

The line battalions and the Tyrone Militia battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers continue to use the old Irish war pipes. The Gloucestershire Regiment possesses a unique distinction. It wears the badge of the sphinx at the back as well as on the front of their caps, in memory of their bravery when engaged to the front and rear at once at the Battle of Alexandria in 1801.

One regiment, the 7th Fusiliers, do not drink the Queen's health at mess. The story is that on one occasion some king of England was dining with the officers of the regiment, and said after dinner that the loyalty of the 7th was sufficiently well assured without their drinking the Sovereign's health. They are extremely proud of this peculiar distinction.

The brass feather and red cloth of the helmet of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry tell a tale of the American War. They defeated a strong party of their foes, who vowed vengeance on this particular corps. They informed the Americans that they had stained their feathers red, so that they could be distinguished in the fight, and that others might not suffer on this account.

The Black Watch for their bravery at the battle of Guildermalsen, Holland, in 1794, won the "red heckle," which is still worn in the men's bonnets.

There are doubtless many other old army customs which exist, and few who are acquainted with their meaning and significance. The new Commander-in-Chief of the British Army strongly advocates the cultivation of *esprit de corps* by the soldiers. The knowledge of the meaning of these old customs, recalling the brave deeds of the regiments in former days, would tend greatly to encourage the feeling which Lord Wolseley so wisely advocates, and inspire the men to emulate the valour of their sires.

CHAPTER XX

Curious tenures—Modern customs—Conclusion.

THE study of law-books to a layman is not usually exhilarating, but the subject of tenures presents some features of interest, and is not destitute of amusement. So curious are some of these tenures, that one can but "smile at the inoffensive mirth both of our kings in former times, and lords of manors in creating them."[1] Most of them have fallen into disuse, or have since been converted into rent. Petit Serjeanty have been abolished by Act of Parliament as long ago as the reign of Charles II.; but several of the customs pertaining to manors have lingered on to our times, and the honorary services of Grand Serjeanty, relating to personal services discharged to the Sovereign, remain in full force. Most of these have already been mentioned in a preceding chapter[2] in connection with the Coronation of the King, and we will briefly refer to a few other tenures of land and customs of manors which

[1] Blount's *Fragmenta Antiquitatis.*

[2] *Cf.* "Court Customs," Chapter xvi. p. 256.

are remarkable, though they have for the most part ceased to be required.

Blenheim Palace, near Woodstock, is held by the Duke of Marlborough by the tenure of presenting a banner yearly at Windsor Castle, on the 2nd of August, in memory of the battle of Blenheim, fought in 1704. The honour of Woodstock was given to the Duke by Queen Anne for the victory he gained on that day. The Duke of Wellington holds the manor of Strathfieldsaye by a like tenure, and is required to present a banner to the Sovereign yearly in memory of Waterloo.

The Isle of Man was granted to the Stanleys by Henry IV., who required them to render to the Sovereign two falcons on the day of his coronation. The Barons Furnival of Farnham-Royal, Bucks, had to provide a glove for the right hand of the king on Coronation Day, and to support his right arm while he held the sceptre. To serve the king with a towel and basons, to provide water for the king's hands, to make one mess in an earthen pot in the royal kitchen, to provide five wafers, to carve, to serve the king with a cup, to provide two white cups, to take charge of the napery, to be chief larderer, to keep the door of the pantry,—these and many other services on Coronation Day are attached to the holding of various manors and baronies.

Nor were these Grand Sergeanties restricted only to Coronation Day. Many noble lords held manors by the service of carving for the king at annual feasts, or serving him, or bearing a rod before him, or guarding his person (as at Shrewsbury when he lay there), or holding the head of the king when he should cross the seas and was troubled with *mal de mer*. The lord of the manor of Hoton, Cumberland, was obliged to hold the stirrup of the king when he mounted his horse in Carlisle Castle, and the lord of Shirefield had the unpleasant duty of being master of the king's *meritrices* or laundresses, as well as dismembering condemned malefactors, and measuring the gallons in the king's household. To carry a hawk for his Majesty, to present him with a grey hood or cap, or a white ensign whenever he warred in Scotland, to attend with proper arms, a horse, sword, lance, or simple bow and arrows whenever his services were required, were the duties incumbent upon other manor lords. The service of cornage or blowing horns was very common, especially in the Border counties, where Scottish invasions were frequent. The owner of Kingston Russell, Dorset, was obliged to count the king's chessmen, and to put them in a bag when the king had finished the game. The Bacotes or Beckets of Shrivenham,

Berks, had to meet the king whenever he was passing through the town, and present two white capons, making the speech:—"*Ecce domine istos duos capones quos alias habebitis sed non nunc.*"

In former times the Sovereigns used to travel frequently through the country, and hold their courts at divers places, to keep Christmas at Reading, or Easter at Norwich; hence in order to provide for the immense royal household, the lords of the neighbouring manors were required, by virtue of holding their estates, to furnish various kinds of food for the royal table. These services come under the head of Petit Serjeanty. Grand Serjeanty is a personal service; but Petit Serjeanty does not require a tenant to act in person, but only to render and pay yearly to the king certain things, as a man pays a rent. Thus the holder of the Barony of Biewell, Northumberland, had to find thirty soldiers for the guard of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. To provide a footman with bows and arrows for forty days, or an esquire with an haubergeon and a lance to go with the king's army into Wales, was incumbent on the owners of several manors. Felsted, Essex, and many other manors, were held by service of keeping two palfreys or one horse for the king's use. Arms were also provided in the same manner. The lord of Carleton had to

furnish a catapult; the lord of Sholey a pole-axe; the lord of Pole a sword of the value of three shillings and fourpence; the lord of Drakelow a bow, quiver, and twelve arrows; he of La Barr one salmon and two barbed arrows. Lands at Chichester had to furnish a spindle-full of raw thread to make a string for the king's cross-bow; and a manor in Dorset provided a curry-comb. The variety of these services is indeed remarkable. Clothes and provisions for the king's household were supplied by various manors, litter for the king's bed, rushes for the floor of his chamber, gloves turned up with hare's skin, scarlet hose, beside an endless supply of fat capons and wine for his table. Yarmouth provided a hundred herrings, which were baked in twenty-four pies, and conveyed by the lord of the manor of East Carlton to the king.

Hunting was ever a sport loved by kings; hence we find many manors burdened with the duty of keeping the king's forests, hunting wolves and foxes and cats, driving all vermin from the royal preserves, and providing dogs and hawks. Greyhounds and harriers seem to have been special favourites, and the prevalence of hawking is abundantly exemplified by the number of manors held by the serjeanty of falconry. Some manors were bound to render certain religious ser-

vice. The lord of Coningston had to say daily five Pater-Nosters and five Ave-Marias for the souls of the king's progenitors; the lord of Greens-norton held his lands by the service of lifting up his right hand towards the king yearly on Christmas Day; the lord of Burcester, by providing a light for the altar of St. Nicholas. Even the king sometimes provided for the supply of his own offerings at the altar, for we find that when he came to hear mass at Maplescaump, Kent, the lord of the manor had to provide him with a penny for an oblation.

Sea-coast manors and towns had to provide ships for the royal service, and sailors to man them, and an endless variety of other services existed, such as providing labourers for castle-works, paying smoke-silver, furnishing honey, or nails for the king's ships, or tongs, or horse-shoes, frightening away wolves, maintaining bridges, or other duties which the necessities of the time, or the ingenuity of the monarch suggested.

Nor were the kings the only personages entitled to such services. The Counties Palatine of Durham, Chester, Ely, and others, had royal powers in their own territory, and the Bishop of Durham and other Palatinate rulers were entitled to the same kind of services from various manor-lords in their domains which were rendered to the

king in other parts of the country. Moreover, the Bishops of Durham were no less partial to the chase than their royal masters, and many lords had to provide them with hounds and hawks, and to keep their forests in the same manner as Windsor or New Forest was preserved for the king.

Dunmow was not the only place in England where fortunate couples were rewarded with a flitch of bacon after passing their first year of married life amicably. The manor of Whichnor, Stafford, was held by Sir Philip de Somervile by the service of providing a flitch of bacon and a quarter of wheat for all such happy couples. The oath which the husband was obliged to take was as follows:—

"Hear ye, Sir Philip de Somervile, lord of Whichnor, maintainer and giver of this bacon, that I ——, since I wedded ——, my wife, and since I had her in my keeping and at my will, by a year and a day after our marriage, I would not have changed for none other, fairer or fouler, richer or poorer, or for none other descended of greater lineage, sleeping or waking, at no time. And if she were sole and I sole, I would take her to be my wife before all women of the world, of what conditions soever they be, good or evil, as help me God and His saints, and this flesh and all fleshes."

At Chingford, Essex, an estate was held by a very curious tenure. Whenever it passed into new hands the owner, with his wife, man-servant, and maid-servant, came on horseback to the parsonage and did his homage by blowing three blasts on his horn; he carried a hawk on his fist, his servant had a greyhound in a slip, both for the use of the rector on that day. He received a chicken for the hawk, a peck of oats for his horse, and a loaf of bread for his greyhound. After dinner the owner blew three blasts on his horn, and then with his party left the vicarage.

Some other tenures were secured by the presentation of one clove, horse-shoes, a horn, three grains of pepper, and other strange and unusual gifts. Wyfold Court is held by the tenure of presenting a red rose to the king whenever he should pass the house on May Day.

The Castor Whip tenure is remarkable, and the custom has only recently died away, the last whip used being in the possession of Mr. William Andrews, the Hull antiquary. On Palm Sunday a servant from the Broughton estate attended service at Castor church with a new cart-whip, and after cracking it three times in the porch marched with it to the manorial seat. When the clergyman began the second sermon he quitted his seat

with his gad-whip, having a purse containing thirty pieces of silver fixed at the end of the leash, and kneeling down on a cushion held the purse suspended over the head of the clergyman during the reading of the sermon. Then he returned to his seat, and left the purse and whip at the manor house.

Many other curious services and remarkable tenures might be mentioned; but as most of them have now become obsolete they can scarcely claim a record in a book which deals mainly with existing customs.

Although many of our old customs have died new ones have sprung into being, and may be regarded as fairly established. The observance of "Primrose Day," the birthday of Lord Beaconsfield, has now become popular, and the universal wearing of the flower on April 21st by the members of the political party to which the noble earl belonged, seems to denote that the custom will not soon die, but that it has "come to stay" for many years yet.

The origin of "Primrose Day" is entirely due to the energy of one gentleman, Sir George Birwood, of the India Office. In spite of much discouragement he persevered in his endeavour to induce people to mark the birthday of Lord Beaconsfield by the wearing of the primrose. Letters were written to the *Times;* advertisements inserted in all

the leading newspapers; the florists' aid solicited; several noblemen set the example; the enthusiasm spread; until at length success was assured, and "Primrose Day" became firmly established as a popular commemoration of the distinguished politician. It is seldom that a custom has arisen so rapidly, or that the energy and enthusiasm of one gentleman have been responded to so readily by a large section of the people.

There are some misguided people who advocate the restoration of the House of Stuart to the English Throne, and with much ceremony decorate each year the statues of the Stuart monarchs, and drink the health of "him who is over the water," as in the "good old days" of the old and young Pretenders. The last anniversary of the martyrdom of the White King was celebrated with much ceremony in one of the city churches, and splendid white wreaths adorned the statue of the ill-fated monarch.

Possibly many other modern customs which can lay no claim to any high antiquity could be added, but which will ere long be firmly established amongst us as popular ceremonials.

In concluding this record we would express a hope that no important custom has been omitted. The collecting of those which we have described has been no small task, though

it has been a labour lightened by much interest, and by the ready help of those who have so willingly assisted us. We would venture to hope that those who are in a position to preserve any existing custom in their own neighbourhood will do their utmost to prevent its decay. Popular customs are a heritage which has been bequeathed to us from a remote past, and it is for us to hand down that heritage to future generations of English folk. If this result be attained, our labours will not have been in vain in endeavouring to describe the quaint manners and customs of the English people at the close of the nineteenth century.

APPENDIX

BERKSHIRE MUMMING PLAYS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Molly, a stalwart man, dressed in woman's gown, shawl, and bonnet, with a broom in hand. A ludicrous imitation is given of a woman's voice.
King George, dressed as a knight, with helmet and clothes covered with strips of coloured paper, and a sword, &c.
Beau Slasher, a French officer.
Doctor, arrayed in tail-coat, knee-breeches, &c.
Jack Vinny, a jester, with a tall fool's-cap.
Happy Jack, dressed in tattered garments.
Old Beelzebub, with a long white beard, as Father Christmas.

MOLLY *enters, flourishing her broom, and pretending to sweep with it.*

A room, a room, I do presume,
For me and my brave men;
For we be come this Christmas-time
To make a little rhyme.
And 'ere we come at Christmas time,
Welcome, or welcome not,
Hoping old Father Christmas
Will never be forgot.
Last Christmas Day I turned the spit,
Burned my fingers, and of it yet.

A spark flew over the stable,
The skimmer hit the ladle.
Ah! says the gridiron, can't you two agree?
I be the justice, bring 'em afore me.
And now we shows activity of youth,
Activity of age;
Such action you never see upon
Another stage.
And if ye won't believe what I have had to say,
Walk in, King George, and clear the way.

Enter KING GEORGE.

King George. I be King George, a noble knight,
I lost some blood in English fight;
I care not for Spaniard, French, nor Turk,
Where's the man as can do I [= me] hurt?
And if before me he dares stand,
I'll cut him down with this deadly hand.
I'll cut him and slash him as small as flies,
And send him to the cookshop to make mince pies
And so let all your voices sing
As I'm the royal British king.

Enter FRENCH OFFICER.

French Officer. I be a bold French officer
Beau Slasher is my name,
And by my sharp sword at my side,
I hope to win the game.
My body's lined with lead,
My head is made of steel;
And I be come from Turkish land
To fight thee in the field.

King George. Oh! Slasher, Slasher, don't thou be too hot,
For in this room thee'lt mind who thee has got;
So to battle, to battle, let thee and I try
To see which on the ground first shall lie.

[*They fight, their swords clapping together with great noise. After a little fighting the French Officer hits King George in the leg, which causes him to fall.*

Molly. Doctor! Doctor! make no delay,
But make thee haste and come this way.
Doctor! Doctor! where be'st thee?
King George is wounded in the knee—
Ten pounds if that noble Doctor was here.

Enter DOCTOR.

Doctor. I be the noble Doctor Good,
And with my skill I'll stop his blood.
My fee's ten pounds, but only five
If I don't raise this man alive.

[*Feels his pulse and shakes his leg.*

This man be not quite dead; see how his leg shakes,
And I've got pills as cures all ills.
The itch, the stitch, the palsy, and the gout,
Pain within and pain without,
And every old woman dead seven year,
If she's got one tooth left to crack one of these here.

[*He holds up a box, shakes it to rattle the pills, opens it, takes a large one and stuffs it into the King's mouth.*

Rise up, King George, and fight again,
And see which of you first is slain.

[*King George jumps up and fights with the French Officer still fiercer than before. King George hits the Officer, who falls down flat.*

Molly. Doctor! Doctor! do thy part;
This man is wounded to the heart.
Doctor, can you cure this man?

Doctor. No, I see he's too far gone.

Molly. Then walk in, Jack Vinny.

Enter JACK VINNY.

Jack Vinny. My name is not Jack Vinny;
My name is Mr. John Vinny—
A man of fame, come from Spain,
Do more than any man again.

Doctor. Well, what can'st thee do, Jack?

Jack Vinny. Cure a magpie with the toothache.

Doctor. How?

Jack Vinny. Cut his head off and throw his body into the ditch.

Doctor. Well, cure this man.

Jack Vinny. If he'll take one drop out of my drug bottle,
Which is one pennyworth of pigeon's milk
Mixed with the blood of a grasshopper,
And one drop of the blood of a dying donkey,
Well shaken afore taken,
I'll be bound he'll rise up and fight no more.
Give me my spectacles.

[*A wooden pair of spectacles is handed to him.*

Give me my pliers.

[*A large-sized pair of pliers is handed to him. He proceeds to draw out one of the Officer's teeth, and exhibits a large horse's tooth.*

Here's a tooth enough to kill any man,
But I will cure this man.

I come from Spain and thee from France;
Give us thy hand, rise up and dance.

[*French Officer rises. The two dance together.*

Molly. Walk in, Happy Jack.

Enter HAPPY JACK.

Happy Jack. I be poor old Happy Jack,
With wife and family at my back;
Out of nine I have but five,
And half of them be starved alive.
Roast-beef, plum-pudding, and mince-pie,
Who likes them here better than I?
The roads be dirty, my shoes be bad,
So please put something into my bag.

Molly. Come in, Father Beelzebub,
Who on thy shoulder carries a club,
Under thy arm a dripping-pan,
Ben't he now a jolly old man?

Enter BEELZEBUB.

Beelzebub. Here comes I, ain't been yet,
With my great head and little wit;
My head's so big, and my wit's so small,
So I brings my fiddle to please ye all.

[*Commences to play on the fiddle, and all dance a reel. Molly walks round and collects money from spectators.*

END OF PLAY.

In the neighbourhood of Reading, at Compton, and other places, a Turkish Knight takes the place of the French Officer, and announces himself in the following lines:—

Here comes I, a Turkish Knight,
Come from Turkey-land to fight;
I myself and seven more,
Fought a battle of eleven score—
Eleven score of well-armed men;
We never got conquered it by them.

King George replies:—

Whoa, thou little fellow, as talks so bold;
'Bout they other Turkish chaps I've been told.
Draw thy sword, most parfile knight,
Draw thy sword and on to fight,
For I'll have satisfaction before I goes to-night.
My head is made of iron,
My body's made of steel;
And if ye won't believe me,
Just draw thy sword and feel. [*They fight.*

In the Steventon mummers' play King George calls himself the "Africky King." Beau Slasher, the French officer, fights with him. At Bright-Walton, Molly is known as Queen Mary, possibly a corruption of the Blessed Virgin. The play in this village is performed in most approved fashion, as the Rector has taken the matter in hand, coached the actors in their parts, and taught them

some elocution. It is acted in the school-room in a village entertainment, where it affords great delight to the rustics, no less than to the performers themselves.

The mumming play as performed at Islip, Oxon, in December last, is thus reported by an eye-witness and faithful recorder of old customs :—

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Molly, an old woman, in a sun-bonnet, carrying a broom.
King George, carries a broadsword.
Duke of Northumberland, carries a broadsword.
Doctor, blue coat with brass buttons.
Beelzebub, black face, bludgeon in one hand, frying-pan in the other.
Fat Jack, has large hump on his back, and carries thick stick.

Enter MOLLY, *with broom in hand.*

In comes I, old Molly, sweeping up.
Merry, merry Christmas and happy New Year,
Pocket full of money and cellar full of beer.
I had six children last night; I bred them up in a tinder-box.
I had a slice of bread and lard given me the night before;
I eat all that myself. Don't you think I am a jolly old other mother to them all?
(*Shouts*) Come in, next man.

Enter NORTHUMBERLAND, *brandishing sword.*

In come I, the Royal Duke of Northumberland,
With my broadsword in my hand.

Where's the man that would dare to bid me stand?
I would cut him as small as flies,
And send him to the cookshop to make mince-pies,
Mince-pies hot, mince-pies cold;
I'd send him to the Old Man before he's nine days old.

Molly. Come in, next man.

Enter KING GEORGE, *brandishing sword.*

Where is that man that dares to bid me stand?
Although he swaggers and swears he'd cut me up as small as flies,
And send me to the cookshop to make mince-pies,
Mince-pies hot, mince-pies cold,
And send me to the Old Man before I'm nine days old.
Battle to battle betwixt you and I,
See which is on the ground first, you or I.
Guard your blows and guard your nose,
Or down on the ground you quickly goes.

[*They fight, and Northumberland falls.*

King.[1] Doctor! Doctor! I've killed a man.

Doctor's voice from without. More like a monkey, and stole his face.

King. Doctor! Doctor! do your part,
For King George is wounded to the heart,

[1] There is an obvious blunder here. If "*King George* is wounded to the heart," then he, and not *Northumberland*, ought to fall, and the dialogue should be spoken by Northumberland.

From the heart to the knee;
I'll give five shillings for a good old doctor like thee.

Doctor. I shan't come for five shillings, or nothing like it.

King. Ten shillings, then.

Doctor. That's more like it.

King. Come in, Jack Spinney!

Enter DOCTOR.

My name's not Jack Spinney,
My name's Mister Spinney—
A man of great pain,
Do more than you or any man again.

King. What can you do so clever?

Doctor. Cure the magpie of toothache.

King. How should you do it?

Doctor. Cut off his head and throw his body in the ditch.

King. Come and serve this man the same.

Doctor. In comes I, old Doctor Good,
Whose hands are never stained with blood.

I'm not one of these quick-quack doctors. I come to do the good of the country, both to ladies and gentlemen.

I can cure the hip, the pip,
The palsy and the gout;
And if the Old Man's in that man,
I can fetch him out.

I've travelled Old England, Scotland, Wales, and Spain,
Take one of my soft pills and rise again.

[*Gives pill, and Northumberland rises.*

Come in, next man.

Enter BEELZEBUB.

In comes I, old Beelzebub,
On my shoulders I carry my club;
In my hand a frying-pan;
Don't you think I'm a jolly old man?
Come in, next man.

Enter FAT JACK.

In comes I, old Fat Jack,
My wife and family at my back;
My wife's so big, my family small,
I've brought you a rattle to please you all.

[*They all dance round the room. Molly falls down and groans.*

King. My wife Susannah looks very ill.

Doctor. What's her complaint?

King. Toothache, I think.

Doctor. Fetch my horse, Jack.

Fat Jack. I shan't. Fetch it yourself.

Doctor. What! Keep a dog and bark myself! Fetch him *this minute.* (*Fat Jack brings up one of the disengaged characters, and Doctor tries to get on his back; he plunges about.*) Give us a leg up, Jack. Woa! woa! (*Doctor is thrown off.*) Jack, you give my horse too much corn.

Fat Jack. I only give him a bean and a half.

Doctor. That's a bean too much.

Fat Jack. Feed him yourself next time.

(*Doctor examines Molly, and gets out a pair of pincers.*) Toothache, you think?

King. Yes.

Doctor. Just come and give a pull then. (*Takes*

hold of nail which Molly has sticking out of her mouth.) *Pull!* (*Fails to draw it.*) That's not got him. Pull! (*Draws out nail.*) *That's* got him. Why, here's a tooth as long as a two-inch nail, and got roots like a poplar tree. I'll put that in my pocket for a keepsake.

Bring me any old woman that's been dead
seven years,
Seven years laid in her grave,
She could rise up and eat bread and cheese
heartily,
Her life I am bound to save.
I've travelled Old England, Scotland, Wales,
and Spain,
Take one of my pills and rise again.

[*Molly takes pill and rises.*

FINIS.

At Bampton, in Oxfordshire, the following play is performed at Christmas :—

FATHER CHRISTMAS.

In comes I, old Father Christmas,
Welcome in, or welcome not ;
And I hope that I, old Father Christmas,
Will never be forgot.
There's a time for work, and a time for play,
A time to be merry, and a time to be gay ;
A time to be tipsy, a time to be free,
It's true enough this Christmas-time we all so jovial be.
King George, the Doctor, and the Turk will here
together meet,
The Doctor with his physic, and bright, sharp swords
set.

For one will kill the other, and the Doctor will raise him up.
How happy we shall be with our regious [?] Christmas-cup.
Bold Robin Hood and Little John will pass the beer pot round,
Two little jovial chaps never could be found.
Come in, King George.

Enter KING GEORGE.

In comes I, King George; from over the sea I came;
My name it is King George, and you shall hear the same.
First I fought in France, and then I fought in Spain,
Now I come to Old England to fight the rich Turk o'er again.
I saw the rich Turk standing by,
He took an oath that I should die.
I cut him, I pierced him, and brought him to the slaughter,
And by that means I married the King of Egypt's daughter.

Enter TURKISH KNIGHT.

Turkish Knight. Here comes I, the Turkish Knight;
I've come from Turkish land to fight;
And of King George, if he be here,
I'll make his heart both quake and fear.
King George, if you and I we can't agree,
Pull out your sword and fight with me.
King George. I, King George, will pull out my sword and fight with thee;
I'll pull out my purse and pay;
We'll have good satisfaction before we go away.

Turkish Knight. I will in with thee for life, or value thee not; thou must give up sooner or later on, or else no more room for immortality.

So mind your eyes and guard your blows,
Or else I tap you on the nose.

[*They fight, and Turkish Knight falls.*

King George. Two hundred pounds would I put down
If there's a doctor to be found. [*No answer.*
Three hundred pounds would I put down
If there's a doctor to be found. [*A knock is heard.*
Who's there?

Doctor. The Doctor.

King George. Come in, Doctor. Where dost thou come from, good Doctor?

Doctor. Italy, Sitaly [Sicily], Germany, France, and Spain;
There is my home, there I return again.

King George. What sort of disease do thy pills cure, good Doctor?

Doctor. All sorts of disease.
The itch, the stitch, the palsy, and the gout,
Pains within and pains without.
I'll also cure the magpie of toothache.

King George. How do you do that, Doctor?

Doctor. Why, cut his head off and throw his body in the ditch. Or bring to me an old woman seventy years dead, seventy-seven years laid in her grave; if she can raise up her head and crack one of my wimple-pimple pills, I lay a fifty-pound bond from all human ills her life to save. If there's another quack doctor in the land, and can do any more than I can, just let him come and raise this dead man.

Come in, Jack Finney.

Jack Finney. Here comes I, as ain't been hit,
With my big head and little wit;
My head's too big, my wit too small,
I will endeavour to please you all.
Ladies and gentlemen, my name is not Jack Finney.

Doctor. Then what is thy name?

Jack Finney. Mr. Finney, a man of great fame;
I does more work than thee or any other man.

Doctor. Then what can'st thou do?

Jack Finney. I'll cure this man if he's not quite dead.
So being the case as it was before,
My bold fellow, rise up thy head and fight once more.
Come in, Tom the Tinker.

Tom. Here comes I, old Tom the Tinker;
I am no small-beer drinker.
I told the landlord to his face
The chimney-corner was his place,
And there he sat and dried his face,
Old Tom Giles and I.
My face is black, my beard is long,
My hat's tied on with a bratten thong.

Ladies and gentlemen, give me a copper or two to get a shave and go to church on Sunday.

As I was going down a narrow, wide, straight, crooked lane, I met a white pig with a long horse's mane. I went a bit farther and came to a pig-sty, tied up to an elder bush, built with apple-dumplings, and slated with pancakes. I thought 'twas all good for trade.

I knocked at the maid,
And out fled the door;
The pig began to shake,
And the house began to grunt and roar.

She asked me if I could eat a half-pint of good ale and drink a crust of cheese. I said "No, thank you," but "Yes, if you please." I went a bit farther, and comes to two old women a snip-snopping. One cut a barley-corn through a ten-foot wall, and then cut the bottom out of a cast iron pot. The other killed a poor dead dog. I took pity on this poor dead dog. I turned him inside outwards, strap band outwards; took him on top of Buckland Hill, barking backwards, throwed him in a dry ditch and drowned him.

Thus ends the first part of this strange performance.

The second part commences with the entrance of Father Christmas.

FATHER CHRISTMAS.

Room! a room! a rhyme please to give me, and my brave gallant comrades room to rhyme, to rhyme this merry Christmas-time. Apt to the aged, apt to the life, like was never seen or done upon a common stage. Stage or no stage—stage of King George—come in, thou Royal.

Enter KING OF PRUSSIA.

King. Here comes I, the Royal of Prussia King, bound to defend all Christians from all harm. I care for no man, neither Austrian, Spanish, French, Dutch, nor Turks. I'm sure no man will do me harm. Let all their voices raise the ring, I am the Royal of Prussia King.

Come in, thou soldier bold.

Enter SOLDIER.

Soldier. In comes I, the soldier bold, Bold Slaughterer is my name,
With sword and sash hung by my side, I hope to win the game.
Where is the man that bids me stand,
Who swore he'd kill me sword in hand?
I'd cut him, and pierce him as small as flies,
And send him to Jamaica to make mince-pies,
Mince-pies hot, mince-pies cold,
I'd send the cook to fetch him before he's nine days old.

Enter KING GEORGE.

I count myself as good as thee.

King George. So does I as good as thee.
So battle, to battle, let thee and I try
To see which on the ground dead first shall lie.
So mind your eyes and guard your blows,
Or else I'll tap you on the nose.

[*They fight, and the Soldier Bold of Prussia falls.*

King George. Is there a doctor in the land
That'll cure this man that's on the ground?

Doctor. Yes, there's a doctor in the land,
Capable of head and hand;
And if this man has got a cough,
I'll cure him without cutting his head off.
And if this man has lost his head,
I'll put a donkey's on instead.
And if this man will pay me well,
No secret will I ever tell;
And if he won't, I'll leave him as a sinner,
And he shall eat a bunch of thistles for his Christmas-dinner.

Such being the case, as it were before,
Raise up thy head and fight no more.
Come in, Bold Robin Hood.
Robin Hood. Here comes I, bold Robin Hood, with bended bow of yew-tree wood, my arrows sharp; and for my quiver
I'll choose an elderly man's good fat liver.

Down under the greenwood tree,
Merrily I come to thee,
To hunt the deer with horn and hound,
And bring our joys this way.
And when we get the nut-brown ale,
We'll start the hunting day.

Come in, brave Little John.
Little John. Here comes I, brave Little John,
With my quarter-staff I'll play the Don; —
I'm not the man to cheat your cousin,
But knock men's brains out by the dozen.
Last Christmas-eve I turned the spit,
Burnt my fingers, and finds on't yet.
The skimmer run after the ladle,
The sparks fled over the table.
Ho! ho! said the gridiron, can't you two agree?
Then, Oh, ho! said he, I'm the Justice, come, bring him to me.
Come all ye jolly comrades, come listen unto me,
It's my belief, and join with us this merry Christmas-eve;
For what I've said and done will please the corum,
And I'll drink all your honours in a jorum.

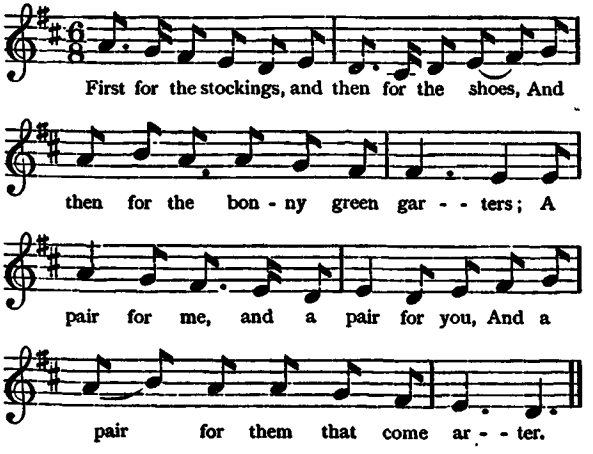
So ends this curious piece of mummery.

Appendix

MELODIES OF THE MORRIS DANCERS AT BAMPTON, OXON,

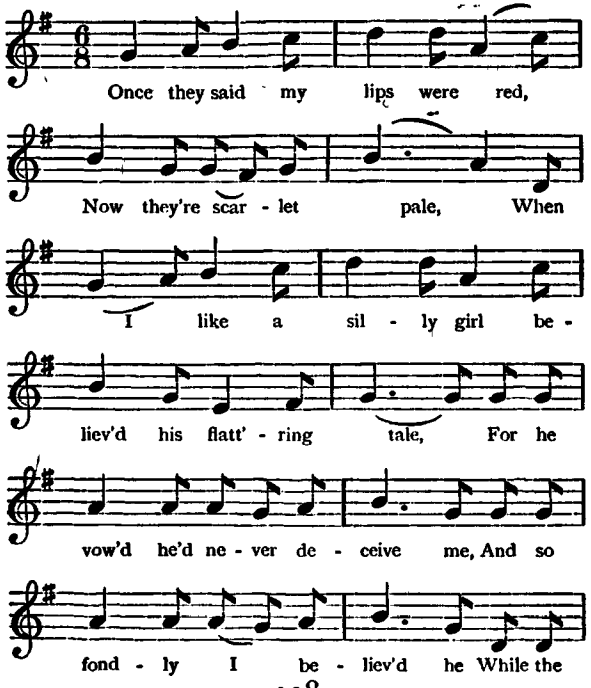
AS SUNG AT THE WHITSUNTIDE CLUB FEASTS.

GREEN GARTERS.


First for the stockings, and then for the shoes, And
then for the bon - ny green gar - - ters; A
pair for me, and a pair for you, And a
pair for them that come ar - - ter.

CONSTANT BILLY.

THE WILLOW TREE.


Once they said my lips were red,
Now they're scar - let pale, When
I like a sil - ly girl be -
liev'd his flatt' - ring tale, For he
vow'd he'd ne - ver de - ceive me, And so
fond - ly I be - liev'd he While the

stars and the moon so sweet - ly shone,
O - ver the wil - low tree.

BOB AND JOAN.

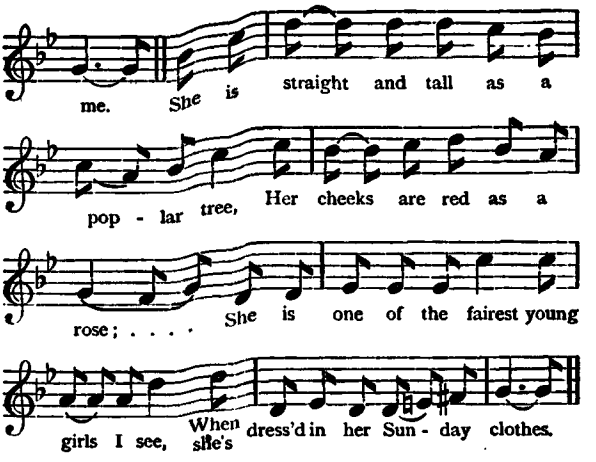
I won't be my fa - ther's Jack, And
I won't be my mo - ther's Jill, But
I will be some fid - dler's wife, Then
we can muse it at our will;
T'o-ther lit - tle tune, t'o - ther lit - tle tune,
Bob at night, and Bob at noon.

Appendix

'BACCA-PIPE JIG, OR GREENSLEEVES.

THE MAID OF THE MILL.

There are fif - ty fair maid - ens that
sport on the green, I gaz'd on them well as you
see; . . . . But the Maid of the Mill, the
Maid of the Mill, The Maid of the Mill for


me. She is straight and tall as a
pop - lar tree, Her cheeks are red as a
rose; . . . . She is one of the fairest young
girls I see, When she's dress'd in her Sun - day clothes.

THE BOAR'S HEAD SONG

(As sung at Queen's College, Oxford).

BASS SOLO.

Appendix

CHORUS.

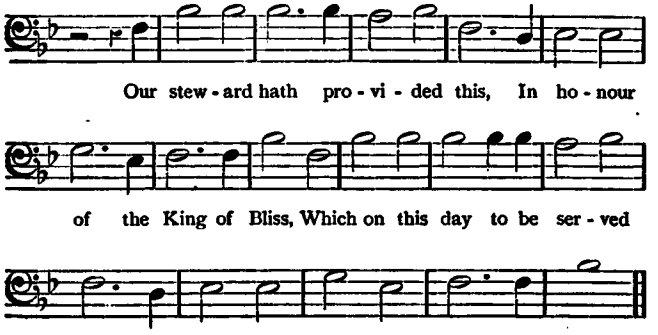
Ca-put a - pri de - fe - ro, Red-dens lau-des Do - mi - no.
Ca-put a - pri de - fe - ro, Red-dens lau-des Do - mi - no.
Ca-put a - pri de - fe - ro, Red-dens lau-des Do - mi - no.
Ca-put a - pri de - fe - ro, Red-dens lau-des Do - mi - no.

BASS SOLO.

The Boar's head, as I un - der - stand, Is the brav - est
dish in all the land, When thus be-deck'd with a gay gar-
- - land, Let us ser - vi - re can - ti - - co.

[CHORUS.

BASS SOLO.



[CHORUS.

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